

*the* LIGHT  
*of the*  
LAMB



EUGEN BISER

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*the* LIGHT  
*of the*  
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*translated by*

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# INTRODUCTION



*The Lamb is the lamp thereof.*  
Apocalypse 21, 23

A key question for conscientious thinkers is this: When is our thought in harmony with the truth of Christ? The answer can be stated in an apocryphal saying of Christ: "He who is near me is near the fire; he who is far from me is far from the kingdom." In other words, the approach to truth is gauged not by how much data we can gather but by how thoroughly our thinking is carried along by the Christian message and enkindled by its fire. We must be able to rise above the gravitational field of worldly reason, free ourselves of the downward drag exerted on our thinking by its bondage to the solitary ego and by its close association with things. We must approach Jesus Christ. As we do so, a new force will come into play, bursting through the closed little viewpoints which happen to be in vogue and which are supposed to bear within them the shape of the world. This force will direct our thought to where the truth of Christ radiates its fullness and power: to the splendor of the glorified Christ. In its origin, in its goal, in its consummation, wherever we consider it, Christian thought is a look upward. That is the direction given it by the transfigured state of Christ. "If you have risen with

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Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth" (Col. 3, 1f).

It cannot be said that this is the orientation either of the inner sanctum of theology or of its application to the world outside. In this area, a style of thinking and speaking has insinuated itself which by literal exactitude and rigid system has killed the intuitive Christian spirit. The truth was not curtailed or slighted, but a sort of petrification fell upon the intellectual climate. Expression became obscure and frozen, but this coldness was disguised as scientific clarity and was difficult to detect. The character of the Christian message as gospel, as good tidings, and its vocation to bring all things into the new order of the Kingdom of God was obscured. Boundaries were drawn up and trenches dug to take the place of intuition and insight. Where solace and liberation were needed came formalism and constraint.

The cause of this dangerous quenching of the spirit is not difficult to find. It is that inclination toward rigid systematized thought in search of greater precision of understanding and expression. The danger of the quest for precision is always that it may be victorious over the liberating spirit of truth, that which surpasses all human understanding and for which we have no terminology. A strong-armed thought established order and laid plans, while the living deeds of our salvation froze to death.

It is immeasurably difficult to find a way out of this confining path. He alone can do it who is the way, the truth, and the life. He does it by going before us and bearing witness to Himself as the way: through the way He walked between the depths of the tomb and



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the heights of His exaltation with the Father. During these mysterious forty days He harvests what He sowed in the labor of His forty-day fast and in His victory over the threefold temptation. Here He speaks the word that nourishes and gives life to the world. Here to all who doubt, His truth becomes clear, without demagoguery or sensationalism. Here He founds the kingdom of truth and love that was given over to Him by the Father. In these forty days, then, He Himself translates the salvation of His Death and Resurrection into language men can understand and speak. He thereby creates the balance between thought and spirit.

If in our subsequent rehearsal of these events we are to retain this delicate balance and not succumb to the gravitational force of things, we shall have to be guided constantly by the original communication of the Risen Christ. By returning constantly to this we shall give place to Christ as His own living medium of expression, even where exact distinctions are called for and decisions are needed, and so really speak in His name.

What we need is not criticism but recall—recall of the trail-blazing self-revelation of Christ and of the “manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3, 10) contained therein. The following thoughts on the glorified Christ are intended to aid this recall.

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# *the* LIGHT



THE NEW TRUTH—The Gospel according to St. Luke gives this summary of the Risen Christ's revelation of Himself: "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled that are written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning me" (24, 44). The Master's interpretation of this "fulfillment" in the verses that follow should warn us not to be satisfied with the obvious, as though His meaning were exhausted by the formalistic realization of the promise. It is of course wholly correct and justified by Scriptural precedent to see in Jesus the heralded one, as in St. Matthew's Gospel with its Old Testament quotations, and as the one prefigured by the brazen serpent (John 3, 14), and by the water from the rock in the Sinai desert (I Cor. 10, 4); therefore, as God's answer to His promises. But even this much is possible only to him who gives his assent, who voices his "Amen" (II Cor. 1, 20). And a great deal more is required, for it is not enough merely to look for comparisons in order to find the figure and the One prefigured.

A new kind of thinking is called for if we are to see Christ as the fulfillment of the divine promises. In par-

ticular we must abandon the spectator viewpoint for one that fits the fact we are considering, the fact that in the very event by which God fulfills His promise our own salvation is decided and our life finds its meaning. Never for a moment may we leave this out of the picture. It is a part of our consciousness as soon as our thinking flows from an act of assent, from grateful love, the eyes of the mind being enlightened (Eph. 1, 18).

This law of seeing has Christ's truth as its pattern, as we see once more in the example of the "fulfillment." Christ makes real and true what was foretold of Him not as an external cause but as the ground—the *ratio*—of meaning and realization of the promises concerning Him. Their truth is this: that the promises are fulfilled in Him; that, for example, He experiences bodily in His elevation on the Cross, or in the piercing of His side, what the brazen serpent or the rock flowing with water prefigured only as types. *He* then is the truth of these events.

This is of tremendous importance to the nature of truth. Truth becomes more than the world of thought, framework of meaning and value relationships which for philosophical reasons it has always been. The closely circumscribed thinking space that had been meted out to it now opens into something surpassing all expectation. Before the mind of man stands not another idea, or another value, but a living Person, Jesus Christ. In Him the universal is condensed to a bodily form—really to a body-form. In Him the abstract becomes concrete reality: Person-reality. In Him discovery gains a living countenance, a human countenance glowing with a divine light (II Cor. 4, 6).

This Christian view of truth, thought of in Christ



from beginning to end, justifies the name *light*, the name which also best expresses the Easter experience of truth. Mere thoughts can at best give surface comprehension. True light exists only where reality is founded, as on the morning of creation; or where a personal mystery is unveiled, as on the Mount of Transfiguration or at the table at Emmaus. The truth of Christ is called light because it is truth reassumed into Christ's own being, shining in His countenance, shot through with His love, and no longer dangling without reality like the truths of the world. It is called light because it is rooted in the knowing and loving Person of the God-Man. For this reason His truth must be thought anew as the rational aspect of His Mystical Body.

The atmosphere of the forty days is filled with this light. In His conversation with the Emmaus disciples the Risen One undertakes to show the two "dull of wit and slow of heart" that He is the personal focal sense of "all the Scriptures." Thereupon their hearts burn; and the heart on fire leads to the opening of the eyes. In the farewell sermon at the Last Supper in St. John's Gospel—the anticipated theology of the forty days—Jesus answers the question about where He is going by saying, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14, 6). Here is truth expressing itself as personal reality; or, from the opposite point of view, here is Jesus in His historical singularity raised to the rank of the all-embracing universal truth.

Much as it molds our intellect, truth left to itself remains in twilight. As Descartes says in his *Meditations*, of itself truth is unable to root out the doubt whether the course of our thought and the laws of reason may not ultimately be projections "of some

sort of evil spirit" (I, 16). Rosenzweig in his *Star of Redemption* (L.C. III, 163 ff.) punctures the myth that truth can create clarity concerning its own facts.

But here, in the Easter consciousness wrought by Christ, truth shakes off these bonds. Grounded upon the historical fact of the redemption by Christ, it surpasses itself and rises to pristine factualness, which is at the same time unassailable certitude. From the same source it gains an unexpected personal aspect, an interiority with itself. For its basis in Christ does not bind truth to something outside itself but leads it back to its own ground—ground that is both divine and historical—where it can be itself. Even while Christ listens to the Father and answers Him, the eternal Word is instilled into every temporal thought of truth. It is only through this divine assent that truth becomes whole, that it lives a responsible life of its own.

This divine assent marks the path that thought must follow to proceed from the outside rim to the center of truth. The steadfast pursuit of truth in Christ by no means leads, as some may fear, to estrangement and isolation from the intellectual world. Rather, it will surpass it, reaching beyond the horizon of the human intellectual world to where all that is distinguished by our intellects or isolated by concepts is found in living unity; that is, in the eternal loving converse of Father and Son. Here flows the wellspring of truth; here is its heartbeat, its center, its law, its home and foundation. Here it draws the breath of life and inwardness. Here it is *light*. We cannot ignore the exclusiveness of this dialogue in God; but we also know that in Christ it expands to an "inclusive exclusiveness" and that we are all drawn to partake of it. For the truth of Christ is light to enlighten all men. Since it springs from the



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discourse of love, it seeks to lead to the light all that love the light.

Nowhere in the message of faith does this inner divine discourse come through so clearly or strike us so forcefully as in the farewell sermon of Jesus at the Last Supper and in its concluding discourse—the high-priestly prayer. The words of the departing Master are spoken from the stage of transition between the world and the Father; they are already the answer to His eternal summons. In His prayer He takes formal possession of the glory that is His: “I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to thee” (John 17, 11). Yet no detail is omitted: the sadness of the orphaned disciples, their anxiety and its symbol, the anguish of the woman in labor—none of this is passed over (John 16, 17). All things keep their full import, but their meaning is enriched beyond the portion of worldly thinking, because they lie in the context of another world. There is a glow upon even these harsh details. The truth of Christ bears them up and frees them from their own inertia and from our narrowness of thought, for His truth is the truth of love.

All this applies in the first instance to man, for whom this consecrating prayer of Jesus is meant. Christ who is loved from eternity and returns that love without stint does not see fit to enter into His final repose in the heart of the Father while we remain behind in the insecure and godless world. Therefore as He speaks this prayer He gathers His love for an act of divine excess. On the threshold of His eternal glory He pauses to ask for us what belongs to Him by right: “Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me; in order that they may behold my



glory, which thou hast given me, because thou hast loved me before the creation of the world" (John 17, 24). A will finds expression here that not only announces a new life born of God but creates it as well. In this "I will" the eternal Word lays claim to His own; to rescue them from loss in the world and to take them finally to Himself. His claim lifts the curse that weighs so heavily on all hearts. It sweeps away the dull mustiness of worldly thinking and its most perilous fruit: the closed-world entity. His expression has that touch that orders thoughts anew, causes things to blossom again. But its efficacy depends on the full accord of those called in this saving "I will," on their willingness to be incorporated in the region of His light. To behave in the spirit of this accord is to be truly free; to think from this spirit leads to the light.

**RECOGNITION**—The Resurrection and the Ascension are the respective counterparts of the manifestations of the Incarnation and Passion. They reveal the profound change that took place in the world and in men when God took His place in their midst and subjected Himself to the yoke of their history.

Of course this change took place in the first instance in the form of the Redeemer and Mediator Himself, the nucleus of crystallization for the new life, rather than on those whose cause He had espoused to the point of self-sacrifice.

But the decisive step has been taken. Christ has been lifted up, and the world is no longer self-sufficient. The burden of futility has been lifted from things, the fear of death broken. Cracks do not appear at once in the visible world, but the atmosphere in which men move, in which they join hands and reach decisions,

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has changed. As the Risen One returns to the glory that is His, He throws open a dimension of divine inwardness which by virtue of its superior truth and reality scatters any attempt to set up an autonomous existence. Even seen from a distance, the actual order of the world can no longer be regarded as ultimate. It is at most the actualized crest of limitless potentialities which because of its convergence simulates a final state.

This reduction of the world order to a relative status is not the result of working with conventional methods on more comprehensive theories. We become aware of it in the Ascension of Christ to the Father, and that is its basis. His enthronement at the right hand of the Father makes public proclamation of that leaning on the heart of the Father in which He realizes His proper being from eternity. This is a clear motif in St. John from the prologue to the farewell address. We know then that we are free from the duress of a finite and closed-world entity because we know we are addressed in this divine dialogue and called to the life that unfolds there.

The center of this process is the meeting with the Risen Lord, as the first witnesses of our Faith met Him, the witnesses of the Resurrection and of the forty days. The Risen Lord is the Word of the Father and the answer of the Son made audible to us. To perceive Him we must abandon all that troubles and chokes up the knowledge of Him in men. This is the message of the Gospel accounts: the meeting with Him has the character of *recognition*.

When He calls her by her own name, Mary Magdalene recognizes in the supposed gardener the one she has so sorely missed (John 20, 16). Inwardly moved



by the words of their mysterious companion, the Emmaus disciples find their eyes opened at the common repast (Luke 24, 30). By pointing to His pierced hands and feet, the Risen One dispels the doubt and hesitation of the eleven and fills them with joy to overflowing (Luke 24, 37). Thomas touching the wounds is drawn to acknowledge the Resurrection (John 20, 27). The miraculous catch of fish on the Sea of Tiberias brings a flash of recognition to the disciple whom Jesus loved: "It is the Lord" (John 21, 7). On the way to Damascus the unbridled persecutor of the infant Church is overpowered by the revelation: "I am Jesus, whom thou art persecuting" (Acts 9, 5).

In these Resurrection accounts we can discern without difficulty for ourselves the principal components of the rediscovery of the Risen Christ. Foremost is His revelation of Himself, expressed or unexpressed, which invariably precedes a recognition. His approach makes direct contact with a particular state of mind: be it sadness (John 20, 15), depression (John 20, 25), fear (Luke 24, 37) or hate (Acts 9, 1)—all are states of mind which choke up a man and keep him from the reality of the Resurrection. But touched by the hand of the Risen Christ, the scales that had held a man in a sleepwalking state fall from his eyes. Knowledge of salvation and knowledge of self bestir each other to the things above; and to seek perfection in the light-some vision of the face of Christ (II Cor. 4, 6).

The Resurrection means so much to us because of what it is in the depths of God. In the language of St. Paul, the Resurrection is the morning of the new creation, the second "Let there be light," which shall never again know darkness. But the second act of creation is greater than the first, for it does not merely launch a

visible work. Here in the second creation it is the word of creative command that stands out. The new creation remains within the eternal divine dialogue. The raising of Christ is the publication of this inner dialogue, which now embraces all who accept and enter into the Resurrection. In the Resurrection the Father speaks His eternal Word into time. The meaning of this crowning deed of God opens up to us as we hear this Word.

\* The second component of the rediscovery is change. The magnitude of the event means that the renewed acquaintance with the Risen Christ goes far beyond any previous knowledge of Him. This is clear in the words to Mary Magdalene: "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20, 17). Jesus is not holding at bay an over-demonstrative love; He is reproving her identification of the Risen One with an old remembrance of Him (Rabboni), as though His death were only a passing interruption of the previous relationship and not the dawn of a qualitatively different and fundamentally new way of being.

But the reproof is also a help. By revealing His Ascension to the Father, Jesus points out to Mary Magdalene the path along which she is to follow Him. Leaving behind her earthly images of Him, she must move on to true understanding.

In complete accord, St. Paul comments (II Cor. 5, 16) on the break in his thinking brought about by his experience near Damascus. "And even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer." It was the Resurrection that brought about this break. By appearing, He presents Himself for understanding, and the understanding of His glori-



fied reality is a basically altered knowledge of Him. The ideas brought along from the past will no longer serve. "The former things have passed away; behold, they are made new!" (II Cor. 5, 17).

\* The third component is the antithesis of change: it is identification. The knowledge of the Risen Christ is really a *renewed* acquaintance, and it brings us home to ourselves for the first time because it takes us beyond ourselves. As long as Mary Magdalene in her mourning insisted on the fact of withdrawal, as long as she tried to hold fast to what could not be brought back, she was estranged from herself. It was sufficient that the living Christ call her by name to bring her to herself; her "bound" eyes were opened. The simple greeting, "Mary," contains the full revelation, "I am He," the same identification given again and again (John 4, 26; 8, 24; 9, 37; 13, 19; 18, 5) to the erring, the questing, the obdurate.

It is this third element that closes out the various inner aspects of the recognition of Christ. Though this recognition raises a man high above world-bound thinking and being, it aims at depth; its goal is a unified being-with-self. It is of the rediscovered Christ that we read in St. John's prologue: "What was made was life in Him, and the life was the light of men" (The older reading, preferred by the Fathers). He is the original divine Word expressing not only the depths of divinity but also the riches of all creation. Unless He bears us back to His own foundation of being, we cannot know Him. He is the Word of dedication which bears witness to us of the inner divine life, this life which unlike ours is constituted by an act of loving communication.

If we accept Him we are taken up into this divinely



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other, and only true way, to personal realization. If we find life in Him we are as never before reconciled with ourselves, lifted above the turbulence of every day, we are filled and satisfied; we are at one, filled with light. We experience the truth of that promise which extends the thought of the Prologue: "I am the light of the world. He who follows me does not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8, 12). So recognition harks back to light, the expression par excellence of the meaning and fruit of Easter. We could have expected this recurrence of the theme of light, for we have met the Risen Christ, someone who lives in the spirit of self-communication and who upholds His victory over death for us all. He grows akin to anyone who steps into the range of His glory; He becomes the light in His heart.

When day comes the shadows dissolve and the horizon is thrown open; and when dawn breaks for us on the countenance of Christ, our range of vision grows wide and deep. See how this is true of the witnesses of the Resurrection. Mary Magdalene was lifted from her old way of imagining things by a mild rebuke, and she proceeds to announce to the eleven: "I have seen the Lord" (John 20, 18). The Lord, *Kyrios*, the name of glory, has replaced the everyday name "Rabbi." After the Emmaus disciples are set on fire by the discourse of their traveling companion, the "living" spiritual thought of the Scriptures supplants the "dead" letter, and they understand Christ as the Messiah, predestined to suffer (Luke 24, 26). The eleven ask the old political question as to when He would establish the divine kingdom of Israel, and the Risen One in His answer opens up a new dimension, a missionary project reaching out to all nations for all time (Acts 1, 6f).

There is another aspect to these examples that is not less important: this recognition of Christ is passed on to others. If we stand in the light we must give light. "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk, then, as children of light" (Eph. 5, 8). The assembly has a mandate to action, the new inwardness bears a commission to the apostolate. Mary Magdalene and the Emmaus disciples, therefore, announce their joy to the "mourning and weeping" disciples; and the eleven after their impatient question and their misunderstanding of the kingdom of the Messias are appointed witnesses of the Resurrection "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth" (Acts 1, 8). They prove through action that they have really recognized Christ. The trembling earth upon that morning of the Resurrection was pulsating to the eternal Word—speaking, giving, and loving.

**THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMES THE WORLD**—There is scarcely a thought in the New Testament as strange to us as that of the power of truth. Yet this thought is fundamental to the Christian mind, and especially to any Easter-awareness. As He announces His departure, Jesus expresses the liberating power of truth in this promise: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8, 32). At the beginning of the high-priestly prayer He adds this assurance: "Now this is everlasting life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him who thou hast sent, Jesus Christ" (John 17, 3). The victorious life He has in mind is rooted in the divine royalty and power that are His. It is His divine kingship radiating out to us. "This is why I was born, and why I have



come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (John 18, 37). This is His declaration before the judge, a declaration filled with that of which it speaks, the victory of truth.

If there is any place where the earth-shattering Resurrection breaks through the world shell and takes part in present history, it is here in this victory of truth. The victory promised by Christ is a glory overflowing upon us, the glory of the first born of the dead, entered by Him once and for all. It overflows upon us who are left behind but not orphaned (John 14, 18). It is His victory for us and in us.

How does this victory of Christ become part of our existence, take possession of us, become our strength? St. John in his first letter, so closely related to his Gospel, answers this question. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (I John 5, 4). This echoes the promise of the Savior in the farewell sermon in St. John's Gospel: "In the world you will have affliction. But take courage, I have overcome the world" (John 16, 33).

This is an "exoteric" view of Christian faith, growing out of the "esoteric" one that we find in the letter to the Ephesians: "to have Christ dwelling through faith in your hearts" (Eph. 3, 17). This inward faith means giving place to the truth of Christ until it takes possession of the ultimate cell of consciousness; until the "no longer I" has become the "Christ in me," born of God; or, to see it from another viewpoint, until His might vanquishes our human weakness. The assurance given the buffeted Apostle is meant for us as well: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Cor. 12, 9).

There is an essential connection between this power and the truth of Christ. The act of faith looks to the truth of Christ for its structure; and as the truth of Christ lives in the concrete-historical form of Christ, so faith means to root one's existence in the Risen Christ: to judge, to act, and to live from Him. To do so the believer must lay aside worldly habits of thought in deference to the truth incarnate in Christ, and along with worldly attitudes of mind he sloughs off all concomitant pusillanimity, mistrust, and anxiety. In return he has a guaranteed source of strength in the Lord of faith, of whom St. Paul says, "We know that Christ, having risen from the dead, dies now no more, death shall no longer have dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life that he lives, he lives unto God" (Rom. 6, 9-10).

When we speak of the conquest of the world by faith, the Resurrection holds a unique position in the content of that faith. Faith, when it professes the Risen Lord, affirms expressly what is already supporting and shaping it. It turns to the Risen Christ as its living basis, in order to take Him up in its expression. It looks deliberately at Jesus, "the author and finisher of faith" (Heb. 12, 2). Here as nowhere else He in Whom we believe is the same as He Whom we believe; the founder of the act of faith is identical with the One mentioned in it. Faith achieves pure concord with itself. Form and content are not only more interdependent but are completely coextensive. Even viewed externally, the act of faith seems incomparably more close-knit and firm. From its inner source it has gained an unassailable victorious power. For with the transformation into Christ the gate is opened to Grace, and



through that gate the strength of Christ now floods over our human weakness. The "recognition" communicated by faith is fulfilled when it is replete with the "power of His Resurrection" (Phil. 3, 10).

This is not all. The victory of which our faith assures us is not only an image of the victory of Christ in the Resurrection, but something radiating from it. In the strict and proper sense, it is *His* victory in us. Of course it is not true, as the illuminati of every age would have it, that the form and laws of world existence have been broken through, and that all things are well under way to their ultimate glorified state. Rather, it is characteristic of the victory of faith that the visible reshaping is still in abeyance. The breakthrough of the eschatological way of life is still limited to the person of Christ, Who, however, as our representative brings it to perfection for us all. The believer steps into the range of this personal gift of the Risen Christ; by faith he enters the sphere of light of His vicarious redemption.

The divine power, therefore, which is seen in the man of faith, cannot be disjoined from the Person of Christ. It is the power of Christ that is victorious over the world in our faith, and that power is Christ Himself. "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God. Yes, we also are weak in him, yet we shall live with him through the power of God in your regard" (II Cor. 13, 4). To this St. Paul adds a request that is the criterion of Christianity, as he asks for the living testimony of the presence of Christ in the congregation. "It is your own selves you should be testing, to make sure you are still true to your faith; it is your own selves you must put



to the proof. Surely your own conscience will tell you that Christ is alive in you, unless, somehow, you fail the test" (II Cor. 13, 5).

When the New Testament wants to characterize life touched and made strong by Christ, it chooses the word which is the leitmotiv of the Easter consciousness: *light*. This is not light as a symbol, as a "spiritual" analogy to the sense experience of light; it is a direct term aimed at the very essence of things, as Christ used it in calling Himself the light of the world. There is no term more suited than this to express the personal effect in us of the victory of Christ in the Resurrection. The conditions of our existence are not changed, as the outlines of things are not changed by the sunrise. Nothing has been added. Yet everything has an altered aspect. The old is past, the new has dawned. The harshness of things and situations has not softened, but their weight, the pressure of dead mass, is lifted from them, since One—for all of us—has broken through the shell of closed innerworldly existence to reign forever above it at the right hand of the Father. Nevertheless, history goes its old way, torn as always between passion and inertia. The Resurrection does not affect human history after the manner of an event within the world. But it does, in the words of Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation*, belong to those events which like lightning illumine the ground of superficial happenings and bring out in them an inner divine history (Lecture 32). It is the light of our faith to see this, and it is the victory of this faith to take a stand against the pressures upon us from a world of blind forces.

# *the* IMAGES



THE LAMB—The new truth in which the form of the Risen Christ appears is not something that comes to us by nature. Rather, it is diametrically opposed to our natural tendency to think in terms of facts and sense data, and it forces us to “mind the things that are above” (Col. 3, 2). The ultimate meaning and the transforming power of this truth are sealed until the day of final revelation, “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3, 3), like the life that is built upon it. This truth comes over our thinking from above, after the manner of light.

Enlightenment differs from ordinary knowledge in this way: while it makes evident and present what it communicates, it does not hand over possession of it to the intellect and thereby become pure concept. Enlightenment’s medium is not the concept but the image. We form concepts of that which we have subjected to our mental powers and which lies in our own frame of reference. But that which is not thus accessible and, because of its sublimity and greatness, is too large for our puny reason, shows itself only from a distance, in the image.

For this reason the image is the medium best suited



to the knowledge of the Risen Christ. For His whole nature stands above all that we can be and all that we can measure. On the horizon of our intellectual field of vision, where our thoughts stumble over the unfathomable, there His truth arises. Thus it is not for the sake of allegory but from a necessity lying in the very essence of faith in the Resurrection that the mystery of the glorified Lord is communicated in images. And among all the images of the Easter consciousness, the one that holds first place, as is evident from the Easter liturgy (the Exsultet, Easter Preface), following the earliest Easter Kerygma (I Cor. 5, 7; I Pet. 1, 19), is the *Lamb*.

In our interpretation of a religious symbol, however, we must be ready to follow it home in the intellectual realm, to its home on the outer limit of our logical range. That is where we are led by the Apocalypse of St. John as it treats the figure of the Lamb. Carried up to the open door of heaven (4, 1), the seer glimpses the radiant glory of the throne of God, and at the right of the throne "a scroll written within and without, sealed with seven seals" (5, 1). The Risen One, in the words of the inaugural vision, holds the "keys of death and of hell" in His hands, but before He reveals to the seer the terrible revolt of hell, He throws open the door to the divine mystery hidden through the ages. The seer is favored with brilliant images of the glory of Him "who is and who was and who is coming" (1, 8). But these are still images, and the brilliance is that of light inaccessible. It is in this visionary view that the mystery rests upon silence and is confirmed as inexplicable. By its very exaltation it draws away from the eager but short-sighted attempt to think it into human concepts, that is, to mingle the two spheres



of wisdom and reason in order to carry off some new ideas.

This silence in the very act of revealing is symbolized by the scroll with the seven seals. It thrusts back the natural striving of reason, but leaves the seer intuitively shaken to the point of tears (Apoc. 5, 4). He is referred again to the mystery of the Resurrection. The victory of the "lion," Christ, had opened the door to the divine mystery at the beginning of the vision; now the same victory carries him over the remaining barriers. The Risen Christ is at once revealer and interpreter, and there is a consecrating purpose in His revelation. He desires not ignorant lackeys but friends who can share His knowledge (John 15, 15). The seer is assured of this by the words of the elder in the closing passages as the vision ends. But then the literal approach returns to image, as the whole course of the vision has led us to expect. "In the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders" appears "a Lamb standing, as if slain" (Apoc. 5, 6). The lamb takes the scroll from the hand of Him Who sits upon the throne and breaks the seal. It is an image which touches both reason and intuition. It is on the border between reason called to divine revelation, and mystery remaining veiled in that revelation. And thus the image does what reason cannot do: it truly breaks the seal and unveils the truth.

In that tense moment, what does the eye see? First of all, what is seen in the visions of the Apocalypse has nothing to do with Gnosticism in its attempt to raise itself in ecstasy above the boundaries of the order of salvation. On the contrary, what is revealed here is the victory of Christ in His Resurrection, preparing the way for our glory, anticipating our exaltation.

The Lamb breaks the seal and human destiny stands transfigured. In that image we see our own vocation, brilliant and glorious because it is the call to the freedom of the children of God; but bringing pain too, because it is dependent on human free choice and exposed to human refusal and guilt.

In the breaking of the seven seals, the border that separates the inaccessible mystery of God from our understanding becomes a mirror in which humanity can see itself in all its worth as well as its perils. All its misery and all its hope lie exposed, as Claudel says in his *Introduction to the Apocalypse*.

We were straining for a view of the depths of God. We find that we receive instead a view of ourselves such as we never had before, and with it a definitive interpretation of human history. We do not see God, but we see our image. We see it not in our own distorted and wishful terms but as it is revealed in the clarity of the divine being.

In the wrath of the Lamb (6, 16) the abyss of human passion is revealed. (According to Claudel the horse-men of the first four seals "are human passions let loose, which make up our misery from the beginning".) In His love (7, 14-17) emerges the true greatness of man's election.

The removal of the seals takes nothing away from the incomprehensible mystery of God. This is indicated when the seventh and last seal is broken amid the smoke that arises to hide the face of Him Who sits upon the throne. But the breaking of the seals does unveil the relation of God and man in the history of salvation.

Man wanted to think God and His mysteries into his own world of thought and action. But just the opposite



occurs here. Man learns to interpret the unsolved riddles of his thoughts and deeds in the figure of the Lamb.

So the Apocalypse has every reason to speak of the light of the Lamb. In this figure, revealed truth lifts us up to itself to fill our eyes with its light, even though we are no more capable than before of raising our own eyes to the source of this light.

With the prophetic explanation of the symbolism of the Lamb we are prepared for the figurative discourse on the Pascal Lamb, Christ, as we find it in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (5, 7). "Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new dough, as you really are without leaven," St. Paul warns in reference to scandal in the Corinthian community. Then he gives the reason: "For Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed."

It is evident from this urgent command that God means the figure of the Lamb to be a principle of distinction and of decision. The light that goes out from Him would create a sphere of "sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5, 8) like to its source, as far as it penetrates human life. The community that acknowledges Christ, therefore, and realizes that it is called to share in His glory, may never drift along in half-hearted indecision. To measure up to the truth which they live, the Christians of Corinth must cast out the one who has given scandal (I Cor. 5, 13).

For there is no partnership with the Lamb other than that of the "bride adorned for her husband" (Apoc. 21, 2). This is the city of God in the double perspective of its final beauty and a present pattern from which everything accursed has been purged, a city suited to "the glory and honor of nations" (Apoc.



21, 26). Where her outline dawns in the distance through the strife of ages, where the heart beats for her and the will bends to her order, there the fountain of life already flows for those who thirst (21, 6), and there shines the light of the Lamb, who is the lamp thereof (21, 23).

THE SHEPHERD—Side by side with the image of the Lamb and of equal rank with it stands the figure of the Shepherd as one of the earliest expressions of the mystery of the Risen Christ. Like the first image of the Lamb, the image of the Shepherd hovers on the frontier of the world of man, and on the threshold of the supernatural world of God. A veiled indication of the double character of this image is the fact that the conferring of the office of shepherd on Peter comes at the very close of the Gospel according to St. John. As set down there, the last words of Jesus referring to the whole Church are: "Feed my sheep" (John 21, 17). Another indication is the fact that in the Good Shepherd sermon, even before He forms the shepherd symbol, Jesus calls Himself "the door of the sheep" (John 10, 7), or simply "the door" (10, 9).

How are such different images as "door" and "shepherd" to be brought into harmony? Jesus shows us in the passage in which He emphasizes His divine mission as Shepherd: "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep" (10, 2). The meanings are wedded in the most natural fashion: the shepherd appears in the door.

Leaving for a moment the immediate meaning of the words, we see something here that is axiomatic for all knowledge of Christ; namely, that the truth about Christ comes only from Himself, because in disclosing

Himself He discloses also the law of knowing Him. In the case we are discussing, that which is revealed, that in Him which opens up to us—figure by the door—helps us to understand His hidden nature which is spoken of in the mysterious expression: "I am the good shepherd." Any entry unauthorized by Him and not through this door, is not only doomed to failure; it is the forced entry of the thief and the robber and stands condemned for its irreverence.

True as it is that Christ is one of us, that for us He became visible, audible, tangible (I John 1, 1), it is just as true that this same Word of God is fully known only to the Father. To try to comprehend Him with everyday thoughts, with the intellectual machinery geared to life in the world, is to fall short of the mystery. At best the effort yields a vapid idealization which is soon overwhelmed by the facts. To understand Christ as He would be known calls for breaking free of the trusted world of thought and ordinary life. Every great religious figure has thus broken free, either by interior self-renunciation or by outward break with the environment, because it was required of him by his experience of a God greater than all.

This liberating movement must go on until it reaches the frontier between divine mystery and what is subject to human thought and control. From this point only one door leads farther, the door that is opened in the Person of the revealer Himself. Here the divine Shepherd meets us, the Shepherd whose sheep know Him because they are known by Him, Who calls them by name because they are included in His own eternal essential name.

This image of the Shepherd is not one borrowed from a stock of human figure-projections, even the most



sublime. Its home is where the finite dissolves into the infinite, where earthly certitude falls away before the uncertainty opened up by religion, where life precipitates into death.

We do well to give due prominence in our thoughts to the image of the Good Shepherd, following the example of the New Testament and the liturgy, and the art that feeds upon both, for example, the mosaic above the entrance to the mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna. Seen with understanding this image becomes the source of light it should be. In its light and strength we see why the hard-pressed Christians of the time of the persecutions found in this figure invincible confidence and consolation. We shall realize also that this great symbol is bound to be weakened and its sense foreshortened when ascetic and artistic interpretation gives it only a little niche in the kingdom of man and denies it the place on the frontier of thought and action that alone measures up to it. In its proper setting the figure of the Good Shepherd brings out the truth of Christ in a way that has been too often forgotten, just as the victory of faith has been forgotten.

In brilliant contrast to the sentimental approach too frequent today, St. John points out in his discourse on the Good Shepherd the essential relation between this image and the truth of Christ, for he gives the principal place to the exclusive mutual knowledge between the Shepherd and His sheep as a singular relationship reflecting the mutual knowledge of Father and Son (John 10, 14). But if a man is bound to the Good Shepherd by the bands of this mutual knowledge, he has found even more than a link with the truth as it dawns in the countenance of Christ, its true home. For it is not the man who has truth, but truth become Man



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possesses him. It enters his thought, sharing with him its own inwardness. It aligns his knowing with his antecedent being-known by God (Gal. 4, 9). It mantles his consciousness in the protective knowledge of the Good Shepherd, in which the co-knowledge of Father and Son radiates out to all creation.

"I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father" (John 10, 14-15). This is the core of the parable as recorded by St. John, the heart of the figure of the Good Shepherd. Moreover, it is here that the heart of the whole world opens to the promise of the most intimate familiarity, as of shepherd and flock.

The process is the same as that described in the farewell sermon of Jesus. There the "excess" of love welling "to the end" is not yet reached even when the Lord, transported by the greatness of this dread hour, allows the disciple whom He loves to lean against His breast (John 13, 23), but only when this nearness of disciple and Master becomes the window looking through to that eternal and essential repose of the Son in the bosom of the Father which He is asking for all of us as He returns to it. The "I will" by which He asks is an objective utterance pointed directly to us, all of us who wish to be included.

It is the same here. The Good Shepherd is not satisfied to set up a sort of relationship between His sheltering knowledge of His flock and the eternal loving knowledge in the Father. By His self-disclosing "It is I" he places us directly into this new dimension.

If we understand this name of Good Shepherd, we can no longer go about as though our minds were sufficient to themselves, and as if we were left entirely to ourselves in the ultimate questions of life. For if we

look at the Good Shepherd when we ask, we direct our question not to uncertainty but to God. We may be tossed to and fro in the weakness of our minds, but we retain the indestructible certainty that the very things we muse upon and ask about in all seriousness have been predetermined from eternity in the loving converse of Father and Son, which, since it is a dialogue of love, is intended for us and addressed to us.

By the image of the Lamb we are reminded that the seven-times sealed meaning of this divine answer is unfolded only gradually, as the judgment of God on the world and its history is carried out. But under the gaze of the Good Shepherd we can live with these dark, unsolved questions, without being troubled by our lack of insight into ultimate things, for we realize that we are enveloped in the divine wisdom.

What, then, of our constant endeavor to understand these hidden things? Whither do the steps lead that we hazard in the dark? This question points to another aspect of the figure of the Good Shepherd: He not only protects His own but leads them as well. "He calls his own sheep by name and leads them forth. And when he has let out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him because they know his voice" (John 10, 3-4).

Not without reason does the evangelist here remark that the audience did not understand (John 10, 6). The guiding power of truth, like its victoriousness and protectiveness, is another aspect frequently overlooked. But the symbol of the Good Shepherd renews it. For if we see the truth of Christ in this image, we see that in each of our thought steps and in the whole path to self-realization we are being led, graciously and surely. Christian thinking is thinking formed by the spirit of Christ, and it means following in thought



the course of that word by which the Good Shepherd communicates Himself to His own in order to gather them into the dialogue of Father and Son. To obey Him means to follow in His steps (I Peter 2, 21), or in the Pauline version, to walk in the "good works" which God, in Christ, has made ready for us beforehand (Eph. 2, 10).

But we do not satisfactorily experience either the protection of truth or its power to lead us unless we think of truth in its personal sense. It is not through laws or prescriptions or anything else that He might provide as distinct from Himself that Christ protects and guides us, but through the singular way in which He lives in Himself and helps us to be one with Him. He is speaking of His self-being when in His farewell address He explains: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14, 6). In the ordinary framework of truth, this does not make sense. It makes sense only if we follow the image of the Good Shepherd into the truth of Christ to find the essential shape of truth.

This shape of truth is outlined in the climactic close of the vision where Saint John treats of *one* shepherd and *one* fold (John 10, 16). He is speaking in the first place of the host of those who will be led by the voice of the divine Shepherd and will find themselves together simply because they have been led by His word. But because this community has as its formative principle none other than the very Word of Truth, the shape of truth itself appears through human unity. The one flock gathered around the one shepherd would not have come about, at least not in this image, unless the essence of truth combined unity with the living fullness of the most perfect possible self-realization for each individual.

Free of the idealistic notion of a "world of truth,"



an *ordo veritatis* comes into view whose ordering power is able to give full play to the spontaneous and the historical and, in this very freedom to self-being in manifold movement, bring about unity, the unity of love.

The parable itself does not cross this threshold. It was not until two generations later that Ireneus of Lyons, the disciple of Polycarp, tackles the problem of truth in speaking of a *corpus veritatis*, a "body of truth." In this image merge the various motifs of the new understanding of truth. Sheltering and guiding are joined in the living membership of the thinker in the spirituality of the Mystical Body of Christ. The truth that rises in Christ is never spirit alone. From its very roots it is "spirit and life" (John 6, 65). The Good Shepherd protects by the insertion of His life, and the life that is born thus He guides to its own end. "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10, 10). The bond of mutual knowledge between Him and His own is the radiation of that community of life which He sealed in the dedication of death. As the way and the truth, inseparably, He is life. It is only when we have found life in Him that we know the fullness of truth.

THE VICTOR—Form and sense are closely knit in the message of Christ the Risen One. What is said determines how it is said, and it takes effect because it is said. When it heralds the glorified Christ as the "Son of God by an act of power" (Romans 1, 4), the message itself rises above form to become a "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (I Cor. 2, 4). It goes directly to the heart, demanding and effecting transformation. From the height of victorious certi-

tude this message reaches out to the believer to raise him from the depths of doubt and fear. In the announcement of the Resurrection victory, the strength of the Risen Christ embraces our poverty. It awakens us with Him and makes us a gift of a share in His glory. Everything depends on this bond, on this communication of our existence with the Resurrection of Christ. Our faith lives on it, and from it draws that conviction that overcomes the world. In it lie the roots of our Christian consciousness. It bears witness to us that we have passed from death to life, snatched from the power of darkness and transplanted in the kingdom of light and everlasting love.

The inward-turning image is used to explain great crises even of within-the-world experience. Dante expresses his mystical inheritance after his departure from the Inferno by describing his walk through Purgatory as a walk through a world of images, which purge away the last traces of estrangement from God and prepare him for the vision of God in Paradise. The crisis of his life and thought is dissolved in a poetic image.

Crisis literally means judgment, and the word is used in this sense in the New Testament, especially by St. John. The judgment here is not a matter for the future but a decision made or at least prepared here and now. It is a decision that cleaves deeply into the state of the present world, more deeply than the most obvious or painful rift; it pronounces the great Either-Or. So it is no wonder that the meaning of this decision, in the visions of the Apocalypse where it so sharply pierces the Christian conscience, should be translated into an image, the figure of the *Victorious Christ*.

Once more the image is found on the threshold be-



tween the conceivable world and the super-world of eternal truth. The apocalyptic seer introduces the vision of the victor on the white horse, with the significant observation: "And I saw heaven standing open" (9, 11). Something beyond the widest range of the mind is first revealed here, revealed at its nearest frontier by means of an image. The figurative disclosure does not remove the veil completely, at least not yet. But the vision of the victor does bear the key to its own interpretation, as does any true symbol. As it withdraws from the superficial glance, it opens a new dimension in which its hidden meaning can be read, if only in a fragmentary way at first. Indeed the rider on the white horse has a "name written which no man knows except himself" (19, 12). Yet the vision itself gives two human extensions of this mysterious name, "the Faithful and True," and "the Word of God."

Faithful and true—that is to say: here is the great exception in a world so often in darkness with regard to religion, a world which the father of lies has overpowered and estranged from God and itself. Here is the "stronger" one (Luke 11, 22) who overthrows the citadel of the lie and unseats its author without violence through the power of His truth. Christ watches "Satan fall as lightning from heaven" (Luke 10, 18), watches as he is "cast out" of the world (John 12, 31).

But His power is not exhausted in fighting confusion and darkness. The way of God is to set aside evil by putting the good and the godly in its place. The godless night melts before Him because in Him the true light has dawned over the world. In Him, the "true witness," the divine mystery is brought to us in full, unabridged. He brings it to us from the eternal silence, where it was hidden in God. The image of God in us,

shattered and distorted in so many ways, He cleanses of the "unfaithful" dross plastered over it and restores to its original. This is His faithful deed. He stands by what was created in Him and restored to God through Him. His faithfulness is the diamond center of His truth. "If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (II Tim. 2, 13).

Thus He conquers; He does not conquer as the powers of the world conquer. He conquers by convicting the world of its pristine lie, its usurpation of glory. He overcomes the world, this world all bottled up in itself, by holding up to it the image of eternal truth springing from love, an image which mirrors the divine likeness in which the world was created.

The Word of God means God is spoken forth, finally and completely, and this Word will be supplanted by no subsequent revelation. Here is One Who lives under the same historical conditions as we and is of the same flesh and blood, but Who is not only filled with the Spirit of God in thought and utterance, but before He even opens His mouth He is, in nature and being, the Word of God. Here in our midst is not only One Whose words and resolves come from a heart that is selfless and attached to God, Who is wholly pure, but One Whose purity is that of the eternal source, where as witness and mediator He rests in the heart of the Father. Here as nowhere else things are called what they are. Roused by this call, they emerge from the cocoon in which our purposes had disguised them and shown themselves as they were meant to be, as they were formed in the dialogue of eternal love.

All this is found in the description of the divine horseman, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, on whose head are many diadems, and from whose mouth goes



forth a sharp sword with which to smite the nations. This description harks back to the earlier one of the glory of the Lord of All, an image saturated with the brilliance of the wide world: the brightness of gold, the glow of fire, the shimmer of snow-white wool, the glazed burning midday sun, the sparkle of honed iron, the mild light of the stars. On Christ, the foundation and inner meaning of all reality, on Him, the first and the last, breaks the radiant glory of all creation. "All things have been created through and unto him, and he is before all creatures, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1, 16-17).

Again it must be said, this is His only conquest. To maintain His victory He need not, as worldly powers do, strike down the enemy and build up a new order on the rubble. He conquers by leading the crumbling culture of any age to Himself as to the final shape of a new heaven and a new earth. He overcomes through an act of bringing back (Ireneus), through the deed of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep in the brambles of alienation from God. He carries the lost sheep back on His shoulders into the fold of truth and love, to defend it there against the attack of robbers.

This is not much of a victory, evidently, in the eyes of the world of power and technology. It draws its forces from leftovers, from what is insignificant in technological usage, but it is the more secure for that. It is the victory of the Eternal Word. Because Christ conquers from the center of His Word-Being He can, in contrast to the impatience of worldly might, accept and endure the temporary coexistence of the two contradictory world-forms, that which is passing and that which buds from the passing phase. The more forebearing He is, the more surely will dawn the day of

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decision when "there is no more time" (Apoc. 10, 6), and when the judge "will slay with the breath of his mouth and will destroy with the brightness of his coming" (II Thess. 2, 8) the "wicked" and the world ruled by him. It will be patent to all in that day that Christ, when as the Lamb He opened the seal of the divine mystery, was already the victorious "lion of the tribe of Juda" (Apoc. 5, 5), for He undoes the power of darkness simply by force of divine revelation and truth.



# *the* SHADOW



NOT YET MANIFEST—The Resurrection is like the outline of the Risen Christ beside the lake of Tiberias (John 21, 4). It stands in the faint light of a morning still wrapped in the shadows of night. Its brilliance is clouded, its power damped. The new day has dawned, but it has not yet broken through to full radiance. The glorious light of the Resurrection is held back, and it will be so till the end of this world-time.

This characteristic obscurity begins already “early on the first day of the week” (Mark 16, 9). The fact of the Resurrection is unassailable: “But as it is, Christ has risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (I Cor. 15, 20). But the event itself has taken place unobserved by man, in silence and obscurity. The announcement of it, this message of joy, fills the women with “trembling and fear” (Mark 16, 8); and when it was relayed to the Apostles, “this tale seemed to them to be nonsense” (Luke 24, 11). A cloud of witnesses—to borrow a phrase of St. Paul (Heb. 12, 1)—attests the reliability of the Easter message, but as in a cloud, some darkness remains.

In the list of names that St. Paul records (I Cor. 15, 5-8) as having seen the Risen Christ there appear, as

in the Corinthian congregation itself, "not many wise. . . , not many mighty, not many noble" (I Cor. 1, 26). Of himself, named last, he speaks as of "one born out of due time." God destined to be witnesses of the Resurrection people who by worldly standards were foolish, weak, and despised. The folly of their preaching He chose as the vessel of the most important, holy, and mightiest of His messages, the word of His unfathomed wisdom, a word which in raising the crucified One laughs at the preening world and puts its cleverness to shame.

To the twilight of this Easter morning belongs also a certain lack of accord among the various aspects of the account, brought out once more in the Wolfenbüttler fragments. These discrepancies have been used most frequently for polemical and apologetic purposes. But they belong to the gray hour of the morning. Some things stand in the light, others are still in the dark. The complete picture is not available.

These shadows affect the witnesses of this hour as well as those who accept their testimony. First there are the witnesses themselves (Acts 1, 22). Mary Magdalene, who was the first among them to have "seen the Lord," was also the first to hear His restraining "not yet." "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20, 17). She must be the first to experience the fact that the presence of the Risen Christ is at once a coming and a going, only a passing by (John 14, 28), and that His Easter nearness is the fruit of painful detachment (20, 17).

The disciples on their way to Emmaus had the same experience. They were favored with the presence of Jesus as long as their eyes were closed, and deprived of it as soon as their eyes were opened (Luke 24, 16-31).



The separateness of the Risen Christ which is a striking factor in these scenes becomes the central theme at the Lake of Tiberias. None of the disciples who met Him there, this unaccountable host who invited them to breakfast, dared ask Him "Who art thou?" knowing that it was the Lord (John 21, 12). The question is already on their tongues, but before they can ask it, it is superseded by a knowledge that leaves questioning without object. Without object is the right term, for it was with the purpose of objectifying thought that questioning was born. With this the Risen Christ will have no part, though He otherwise accepts all the doubts and troubles of the human heart. We cannot ask about Him as we would about something bound by space and time. We cannot say of Him, any more than of the Kingdom of God (Luke 17, 21), that He is here or there. Like the Kingdom, His "place" is rather in the midst of His own (Matthew 18, 20).

This is a partial answer to the question that was not asked, but it is not the answer expected, not a Here and Now that can be conceived objectively. In this answer certainty and uncertainty are weighed in the balance. This is what the mystery of the exaltation of Christ would say. On the cross itself, especially in St. John's interpretation, Jesus is already the glorified One. And in His glory the sign of the cross remains; He retains the stigmata of His Passion.

The Christian form of life founded on the mystery of the Resurrection is necessarily marked by the same incompleteness as the mystery itself. If we would know Jesus as someone above all earthly rank and function, as the *Kyrios*, we must share with the first witnesses of the Resurrection the pain of learning to set aside our

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usual conceptions and in the darkness of nescience await enlightenment. If our hearts are to burn within us at the presence of the Risen Christ, we must prepare to walk with Him the road taken by the disciples of Emmaus: the path of disappointment and anxiety and doubt. If we are in earnest about our will to follow Him we may not shrink from the twilight in which the first-called renew acquaintance with the Lord without ever receiving a direct answer to their question about Who and How.

Against the background of these restrictions we understand St. Paul's remark, so eloquent of life lived in faith in the Resurrection: "If with this life only in view we have had hope in Christ, we are of all men the most to be pitied" (I Cor. 15, 19). From the viewpoint of world events and self-aggrandizement the Resurrection appears as an episode without consequence, over which the wheel of history has long since rolled forward. From an empty grave came no political upheaval. This mighty conquest of death by the One may have shaken the foundation of the all, but the crust is unmoved. Belief in the Resurrection has little or no influence in shaping life that is world-centered. Those who follow the glorified Christ on the road to the Father find Him a strong beacon, since He is the living beginning of the new existence. But those who look back lose sight of Him in history and in the limitations of their condition. Those who live in the light know all about the restrictions in the new creation which dawned with the Resurrection of Christ. They know of the suspended sentence which was granted the "mystery of iniquity" and (II Thess. 2, 7) which delays the final day of revelation through the whole age of the world. But they do not forget that the forces



of the world slumber in the field of the present as seed germinating in the soil, and that the earth must be shaken once more before the Victor's glorified face will be shown to those who have felt His love.

To our eyes, accustomed to the forms and processes of this world, the Resurrection remains in twilight. Its brilliance is overcast, its glory recessed. Its reality becomes present in only a transitory way. It is won through loss, known through not-knowing, carried prostrate to victory. The joy that it brings is born under the wings of sadness. It requires a "however" to express its truth, a "but" shoved forward by a hesitant "indeed."

We are rarely able to see that world events rest on pierced hands, or to read their meaning from those hands. But by rising from the dead the Lamb has taken charge of history. He has received the great book of mystery from the right hand of Him Who sits upon the throne and has begun to open the seals, even though the last will not be opened until the end of time (5, 6ff.). With the slain under the altar we are constrained to ask: "How long?" The answer comes to us as it did to them, in the form of a white robe, sign of the follower of the Lamb, and of an admonition to patience (6, 11). The robe and the admonition to patience, nothing more: These must suffice.

**REDEEMED UNTO HOPE**—When faith has become accustomed to the light within darkness of the Resurrection, the question arises: What does this fettered and clouded mystery have to offer toward the control of life here and now? Is it only a promissory sign of salvation? Is it an appeal that comes to us only in extraordinary situations? Or does it perhaps exer-

cise so much power through the shadows that we are seized and transformed already into the final state?

Within the limited viewpoint of the subjective "I" this question has no answer. Its nature requires it to give its answer without regard to the asker. The question must have a universal setting. It must look to the whole of creation. This is the approach in the eighth chapter of Romans, an example for all subsequent efforts. Seen as a pattern of creation as a whole, the "shadow" takes on a significant shape. It becomes the pointer to the Christian understanding of being and self. "For the eager longing of creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8, 19).

We see our own painful longing in the pattern of this longing of all creation. We long for the perfect revelation of that which we are already, even though only in the estrangement of our existence here in the world. This understanding of the tears in all things is more than a means to a deeper self-understanding, with creation serving only as a medium of reflection on self; rather we know all creation in unity with ourselves, as drawn in with us, as sympathizing and yearning with us. It is a co-knowledge productive of true community. We suffer the same privation as all things and have the same yearning. We see them bent under the same yoke of frustration and mortality. "For we know that all creation groans and travails in pain until now" (Rom. 8, 22).

But let us look at the bright side of the cloud. None of this could even be thought, much less experienced, if the creature were not from the very act of creation destined to personal realization. Dragged down with the fall of man, it is as fallen and humbled creation that it first feels this yearning. With St. Paul we must



make the astonishing statement that at the crucial point of this yearning appears not some natural goal but the sonship of God; or, expressed concretely, the Son of God (cf. Rom. 19, 22). "All things have been created through and unto him" (Col. 1, 16). Descending "into the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. 4, 9), He laid His hand upon this creation. Rising to His glory, He takes complete possession of it, He "who ascended also above all the heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph. 4, 10).

So the yearning of creation does not remain an anonymous and shapeless approximation. It can be called by the holiest of all names. Like the final expectation of believing man, it condenses to a living form, though evidently the most open and rarified of all comparable forms. It is the form of *hope*. "For in hope were we saved" (Rom. 8, 24) St. Paul again assures us, as he interprets the community in suffering of Christian and creation.

Is this the answer to the opening question? No! The Resurrection is not just a divine appeal that wakens us from the occupations of daily life and opens our ears to the "great voice" from the cross (Nicholas of Cusa) and the sky of that Easter morning (apocryphal gospel of St. Peter). Nor is it just God's claim on the world as His property, wretched as it is. The Resurrection is more than all this, as we learn from the joined suffering of creation. It touches our innermost life where it is centered upon God and within itself. With the reservation of the "not yet," our life is transformed into the Risen Christ, endowed with His form, committed to the path He trod from self-abasement to glory.

That is the essential meaning of hope, its living sense.

If we think of it thus, we see that there can be no talk of hope within the framework of self-aggrandizement. In human thinking hope dwells in twilight and there it must remain. Greek mythology interprets hope as the dregs in Pandora's box of evils, of all ills the last and most perilous because it comes in the garb of consolation and help. To understand the essence of hope we must abandon this objectifying approach. We must seek it as love and in life. That is how we shall find it; beneath the mask of worldliness it will be seen inscribed into the basic meaning of all creation, and especially of redeemed man. From this point we shall look upward and see it in its original form. We shall understand it as it is realized in Christ and as it makes Christ the anchor of our own self-fulfillment. For its full truth is contained in the mysterious saying: "Christ in you, your hope of glory" (Col. 1, 27). Hope is more than a force from above, more than a gift from the overflowing fount of eternal love. It is Love itself become man, the seal of its presence among us, its heartbeat in the world.

But at the very moment when it shows its face most clearly, the Resurrection is again obscured by shadows. The same Epistle to the Colossians, with its profound interpretation of hope, tells also of the inevitable hiddenness of our life founded on hope. "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (3, 3). Between the man of hope and a life of worldly happiness the cross is thrust. Its shadow falls not only on the promise of human fulfillment that existed before Christ and continues to exist outside of Him; it falls right into our hoping hearts and darkens even our heritage from the Risen Christ. The Epistle to the Romans tells us this after it has sounded the keynote of our salvation



in hope. "But hope that is seen is not hope" (8, 24). If hope has meaning only in the countenance of Christ as it shines within the soul, then it is evident that we do not have a full view of this inner possession but are only the assurance that on the day of His parousia He will lift the veil through which He looks at us, and will establish both us and expectant creation in the glorious freedom of the Sons of God.

In hope two conflicting lines cross to bring out the meaning of the events of the forty days, which are symbolic of our Christian status to the end of time. Redemption unto hope joins antithetic ideas: saved by God but dead to the world with Christ; transformed into the image of the glorified Christ but under the seal, "hidden in God"; partaking of the sonship of God but imprisoned on this side of the grave and bent under the servile yoke of transience; perfected, but still wayfarers; consoled, but in tears; strong only in weakness. This is the mystery of hope and its hidden power, that it bears the treasure of divine glory in the frail vessel of a fallen and battered existence and still redeems it for eternal life.

**STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS**—The light-dark antithesis that lies over the mystery of the Resurrection shows most plainly in the apostolic life. In its origin, essence, and dignity, the office of the apostle more than any other is based on the fact of the Resurrection of Christ. From this fact it derives its character and its moving force. The Risen Christ confers on the Apostles the fullness of His power (John 29, 21). He sends them to step into His life work and to harvest what He has sown. But He calls them to an even more essential service, that of being His witnesses "in Jeru-

saalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth" (Acts 1, 8). Above every other commission is that of attesting to the God who revealed Himself in Christ, as the Spirit Himself does from the beginning in probing the depths of the Godhead: "But when the Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me. And you also bear witness, because from the beginning you are with me" (John 15, 26-27).

This is St. Peter's understanding of the office of apostle, and that of the first community, for a witness of the Resurrection was elected to take the place of the traitor Judas (Acts 1, 22).

In bearing witness they can follow no other law than that of the divine love to which they bear witness, that love which brings light from the darkness of death, which works salvation out of the curse of the cross, which is victorious in the weakness of the Passion.

Therefore everyone entrusted with the message of reconciliation must become a spectacle to angels and men. A kind of gladiatorial role in the world theater is ascribed to them in First Corinthians (4, 12-13): "We are reviled and we bless, we are persecuted and we bear with it, we are maligned and we entreat, we have become as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all, even until now!" But the drama is more than a bloody encounter with the world. It is described in Second Corinthians as an even more painful conflict in the inner sanctuary of the apostolic form of life, "as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold, we live, as chastised but not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet enriching many, as having nothing yet possessing all things" (6, 8-10).



St. Paul himself had immediate experience of this when under the blows of Satan he thrice sought solace from the Lord and received only this answer, straight from the heart of the Resurrection mystery, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Cor. 12, 9).

It is from within, and not in the first instance from the ugly whims of a God-hating world, that the dramatic role laid on the apostle makes him an object of ridicule. For that truth to which he bears witness does not lend itself to worldly publicity of the kind that both friend (John 14, 22) and foe (Mark 15, 32) would like, but is at home only in the spiritual inner room furnished with faith and love. And as long as this world lasts, the power upon which the apostle depends is the cross.

For this reason the apostle's arrival is greeted with misunderstanding. He is a sign of contradiction, even contradiction with himself. He has a nobility that raises him above all mediocrity and exposes him to danger from within and without. It is on the ruins of his "outer" humanity, of his self-development in natural values, that the new "inner" man of Christ is built.

We can see from this *martyrium quotidianum*, this daily friction between the life of the apostle and the life of the world, how the ultimate destiny always points toward martyrdom, the sealing in blood of the apostle's testimony. This readiness to sacrifice all shows that in the "weakness" of an apostle a formidable "power" is hidden, the power of Him Who said, "I have overcome the world."

What is true of apostolic life extends to all who keep themselves within range of the Resurrection. Members of the Mystical Body of every office and distinc-

tion share in the dignity and mission of the Head. Like Him they are sent as lambs among wolves, in the midst of life they are handed over to death, that they may fulfill in their bodies what is lacking in His suffering. The cross is the ground plan of their existence, as it was for Him. There is no way out of their distress except to look at Jesus who endured the opposition of sinners and in the end was crowned with glory because of His mortal sufferings (Heb. 12, 2-3).

Consideration of the opposition of sinners to Jesus should encourage His disciples not to grow weary but to resist unto blood (Heb. 12, 3). He stands before their eyes as the living interpretation of their victorious weakness. A mosaic in the episcopal chapel in Ravenna pictures Christ as a Roman legionary, strong and confident of victory, standing on the lion and the serpent, but armed only with the weapons of weakness. His lance is the cross and His shield the word, the book of the Gospels in His left hand, opened at the words *Ego sum via, veritas, et vita*.

This is the pictorial counterpart of the Easter Sequence, *Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando. Dux vitae mortuus regnat vivus*. On the cross Christ broke the bonds of God-estranged existence and freed man for God. By being despised and misunderstood He convicted the wisdom of the world of unreason. Through the folly of the cross He proved Himself the wisdom of God. Bound helpless to the cross, He is able to draw all men to Himself. Clouded by hate and shame, He is nevertheless a bright page for all to read.

He is the solution of that contradiction under which we groan as He did. The sign of His sacrifice is our weapon; His truth is our shield.

This is true though every instinct cry out against it.



Christianity must have living space to carry out its mission! Those who are committed to the mission but cannot endure the terms under which it must be carried out, cry that living space must be secured in the world by other means than those of Christian weakness. But the fact is that whenever the mission borrows worldly methods, then it will eventually rue the attempt in the bitter realization that it has fallen short of its innermost duty. Still, those who cannot endure its obscurity will exclaim that its founder did not destine it for the catacombs! No, but once forced into the catacombs it can seek no exit into the light of day except that indicated by the Resurrection: victory over hate and brute force through a love that is stronger than hate, over fraud and lies through the illumination of truth.

In this unequal fight God Himself steps onto the field. Place is made for Him—in our weakness. Again and again the bitter experience of our weakness in the face of an overpowering world changes to the triumphant certainty: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? . . . But in all these things we overcome because of him who has loved us" (Rom. 8, 35-37). Triumph such as this cannot even be conceived on the soil of world-bound existence and the anxiety inseparable from it. It is a triumph that rises above anxiety and care, a victory that need not be continually stabilized by new battles. This is the triumph achieved by One Who has left the world and its grief forever behind Him. Yet it lies in the shadow of the cross.

# *the* SIGNS



THE NIGHT ILLUMINED—The light that dawns on the horizon of our thought with the Resurrection bears witness to truth, truth which infinitely surpasses our understanding and yet is indispensable to it. On the frontier of our world of knowledge we are guided by the pointers and road signs of this truth, the religious images. From the direction of history, shadows fall upon the light of the Risen Christ. His truth, like His glorified Body, bears the stigmata of the historical, because it is bound forever to the fact of the Incarnation and the Passion, so that with our sweeping generalizations we are inclined to pronounce it dead. To the patient viewer, however, it is evident that in this apparent darkness truth is merely speaking to us in a new and human language. Where these shadows cross the divine light, the *signs* are found.

In the images the boundless wisdom of God breaks into the area of our limited knowledge, while in the signs the very limitations, the historical conditioning of our existence, become pointers to the mystery of God. They teach us to read the finite as the cipher-language of the infinite, a language justified by the Incarnation.



Consider the figure of the Risen Christ taking with Him into His glory the wounds of His Passion, standing as intercessor for us before the Father with the sacrifice of His blood in His hands. This is the status of Christianity subject to the restraining "Not-yet." Since the hour of His return is delayed, there unfolds an age in the history of salvation in which everything historical which He took with Him into eternity—and this includes every stage of His journey on earth—is repeated line for line in the life of His Church until the measure of His suffering has been fulfilled in her.

This age is characterized by a knowledge of God in which it is not so much the greatness and glory of God beyond, but His "lowliness" and "folly," suffered with Him, that serve as entry into His mystery; a knowledge moving not on the lighted streets of vision but on the dark path of faith. This knowledge of God lowers itself into the abyss of its own finiteness, now newly understood, as into its own obscure origin, instead of straining to emerge from the housing of the senses as human knowledge does.

The consciousness of election coupled with the sense of lowliness gives rise to the first and fundamental sign, that of the *night illumined*. Before the Church announces the Resurrection, she must first raise this sign in the liturgy of the Easter mystery and pronounce the night itself bright and blessed. *O vere beata nox*, goes the aria of the Pascal vigil, the Exsultet, *quae sola meruit scire tempus et horam in qua Christus ab in feria resurrexit*. It was not in the daylight that Christ came up from the underworld, but at night. For in His sojourn in hell the Redeemer traverses the deepest abyss of His humiliation; by this act of total renunciation He enters into the world's estrangement from

God and self. Thereby He lifts the curse that hangs over man and existence and darkens the "world" to a "hell." The lowest point of His descent is likewise the starting point of His exaltation. The *Descendit ad inferos* changes by logical sequence into the *Ascendit ad caelos*, into the path of glory which the Victor over death and hell begins to walk visibly at His Resurrection.

Therefore the figurative content of the descent of Christ, and of the dark end of that descent, the night, is transformed from within; it brightens to the paradoxical "night illumined." For the word, night, no longer has the same meaning; it no longer tells of a realm of gloom, danger, and terror. The night on which Christ rose from the dead is cleared of its darkness. It is, in the bold language of the jubilant Church, a night made what it should be—a knowing, luminous night.

The ordinary tools of thought break down on this paradox. It directs us to look for light from the impenetrableness of night (*nox sicut dies*), blessedness from unnerving darkness (*beata nox*), and from gloom, salvation (*sanctificatio noctis, noctis gratia*). If we carry this out, it means we must hand over truth to the unknown, happiness to fear, security to danger. All our careful training and experience rise up in rebellion against such a demand. Language itself is reluctant to admit the juxtaposition of "night" with "blessed," "light," and "gracious."

The signs are erected as a warning. The immediate aim of the paradox of the illumined night is to deter us from the short-sighted attitude which can be satisfied with the superficial, the next-best thing, or the meager happiness of the moment, without a care for



the whence or the whither. With symbolic penetration it shows us that our self-confident order of thinking and living would be built on a hollow shell if Christ had not descended into the inaccessible foundations of life to rescue the world, fallen to guilt and death, and lift it away from the forces of negation to confirm it in His love.

Thus the Easter paradox is the impetus toward a universal cleansing of the spirit. It takes away the easily understood superficialities of everyday life. It removes the brashness that grows upon the easily understood superficialities of everyday life. It reminds us that we have our Redeemer to thank, our Redeemer descending and rising again, that our reason does not succumb to error, and that the whole technological framework of the world does not break through into the abyss it so artfully conceals.

Signs are given to help us. The sign of the illumined night tends to lead us above all to a broader spiritual viewpoint. Interpreted in the light of this sign, things that seemed heretofore without plan and inconsequential rise to key positions in thought and action. Themes from which both the everyday man and the rationalist steer clear, such as anxiety, guilt, and death, take on unsuspected meaning in the illumined night.

This is especially true for specifically religious problems. To the religious man the night illumined as the day is an inexorable reminder that in His will to save, the redeeming God took our deficiencies upon Himself. We were redeemed, not because of our success or the prowess of our mature years, but because of our perils and troubles. For this reason the Church can pronounce guilt blessed along with the night. *O certe necessarium Adae peccatum, quod Christi morte deletum est! O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit*

*habere Redemptorem!* Where we should least suspect it, in the abyss of our guilt, God enters into our poverty and in a "wonderful transaction" (Augustine) exchanges it for His Kingdom. "For our sakes he made him to be sin who knew nothing of sin, so that in him we might become the justice of God" (II Cor. 5, 21). The "sinful flesh" (Rom. 8, 3), the epitome of man reversed from his true nature and unworthy, becomes the axis of inversion of heaven and earth. Where we sank beneath ourselves, Grace picks us up. The rank growth of fallen nature becomes the foundation for God's love. Immersed in weakness we become aware of our highest vocation.

But the sign of the illumined night is more than a help to a Christian understanding of ourselves. Through the interpretation of man it always directs attention to its first goal, the interpretation of *Christus passus et glorificatus*, of the Lord crowned with honor and glory because of His passion and death. In Him the Easter paradox gives us an understanding of God far beyond the limit of His creation, for it tells of God stepping down from the throne of His power, of God spending Himself to the last, the God of salvation, grace, and love. Therefore it is especially the shadows in the image of Christ, His suffering, His anxiety, and His death, which now guide us to the mystery of God. At the point where He descends deepest into the abyss of human existence, there eternal love—in Him—emerges most from its inaccessibility. It is where His power is mute and His brilliance concealed that He proves that He is the lover "to the end" (John 13, 1), the beloved "before the creation of the world" (John 17, 24), and the love of God incorporate and appearing in the world (I John 4, 9).

This interpretation extends to the Church, Christ



living on. Again it is the shadows in the Mystical Body of the Lord that lead to new understanding. The stations in the Passion of the Church, from the visible suffering of persecution to the hidden needs of her inner life, are stages in the mystical suffering of Christ descending continually from the height of His glory to the depths of the human inferno. Here also, where the Church is most disfigured and estranged from her ideal, she pleads most urgently for mercy from her Lord and Head, and opens like a chalice to receive the overflowing Heart of Christ.

We do not learn this from everyday facts or ordinary logic. It is the mystery of the Resurrection that assures us that life has been wrung from death, joy from sorrow, and reveals the new divine beginning where there was no hope. Therefore we are permitted to glory in our weakness, hope in our distress, and in our nothingness look for the nearness of God. Of this we are assured by the daring confidence of the Bride, the Easter Church. We are urged on by the sign she writes over our thoughts and lives—the sign of the night illumined.

**THE HEART OF FIRE**—After their recognition of the Risen Christ, the Emmaus disciples exclaim: "Was not our heart burning within us while he was speaking on the road and explaining to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24, 31). Under the cloak of their blindness an inner-consciousness was growing concerning the true identity of their companion. While their eyes were still "held" (24, 16), their innermost being already knew. This knowledge beneath their not-knowing is represented by a sign: they speak of their burning heart.

We must beware of interpreting this sign in the univocal everyday sense as a symbol of love, for that would destroy its specific character as a sign, its paradox, and misconstrue entirely its biblical meaning. For in the language of Scripture the expression "burning" carries unmistakable overtones of "destroying," "consuming," and is more, therefore, than an intensification of the meaning of "heart" as the focal point of love.

St. Paul's canticle to love (I Cor. 13, 3) offers some help when it speaks of delivering the body "to be burned." To the Hebrews (12, 29) he describes God as a "consuming fire."

In the light of these expressions it begins to appear that the "burning hearts" of the Emmaus disciples have something to do with the shadow of the cross, with the paradoxical experience of gain in deprivation, of joy in sorrow, of certainty in the darkness of faith. In other words we have here a sign, of the same type as the illumined night.

The meaning of the sign is clarified as much by the situation as by the happenings in the Emmaus episode. The frame of mind of the two disciples is one of painful tension. While their eyes are "held" concerning the identity of their mysterious companion, he rids their minds of a misunderstanding concerning something else. He enables them to identify the expected Messiah with the Crucified One on Golgotha. Only the last step, the identification of the Crucified One, in whom they again believed, with their traveling companion, was too much; it cannot openly enter their minds. There is tension therefore, and everything presses forward to that liberating knowledge, but it is not forthcoming. The lamps are filled to the brim with oil, but the spark is lacking to enkindle them. Now the source



of the tension becomes itself the source of help. What escaped the "eyes" of sense-bound faculties is known to that inward admonisher, the burning heart. Its flame strikes an arc across the open gap. It is a living organ of understanding over and against the paradoxical knowledge-nescience. In a mysterious way, explicable only in the powerful light of the Resurrection, doing-without becomes a principle of knowledge. On the strange form of a nostalgic request is enkindled an obscure understanding not yet conscious of itself. The burning heart anticipates what is revealed shortly afterwards in the breaking of bread. In this sign the two disciples find the fulfillment of the promise of the Lord in His farewell address. They see Him again, filled with joy that will not be taken from them, but it is a joy born of sorrow (John 16, 22).

We can learn of their sorrow and joy if we follow their conversation. The scandal of the cross has driven them from the little circle of disciples and set them on the road to Emmaus. They see no possibility of reconciling the bloody events of Golgotha with their politically colored picture of the Messiah. The women's report of the Resurrection seems so much empty talk. Therefore they choose what they think is the honest way; they are returning to their homes and their old life.

As they walk they understand all this, and they are talking about it. Their mood is "sad" (Luke 24, 17). Sadly they realize the impossibility of reconciling their hope of a Messianic salvation with the horrible fact of the cross. Sadly they accept the tragic course of events as final. Sadly they set out on the path that their disappointment suggests.

Even the divine solution which they hear on the way

does not completely relax this tension. The solution reshapes their Messianic image of glory and frees it from political distortion, but it does not make the "must suffer" understandable. "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering into his glory?" (Luke 24, 26). The reality of the cross is justified, but its full meaning is still not clear.

On the other hand, the internal objections to this "must suffer" are not silenced. Rather there is about it a peculiar evidence, which is working under cover of their tension and which is taken up by the burning heart. For this the scriptural proof—"beginning then with Moses and with all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things referring to himself"—was not sufficient. The evidence which this mysterious companion brings to the supposed "must" is Himself. There is some preparation when the two disciples close their report on the events in Jerusalem with the resigned statement: "but him they did not see" (Luke 24, 24). Here their speech is already trying, if only haltingly, to rise above the level of mere communication of objects and meanings toward true dialogue. Speech fulfills its dialogic potentialities when through its power of naming it is the medium of a personal presence, or, as in this case, when it directly brings to mind a personal absence. The "sad talk" of the two disciples moves toward this as a center of gravity. It is not so much the new understanding of the Scriptures as the real presence of the One referred to in the Scriptures that makes the "must" of the Passion and the cross credible in its evidence.

Of course it is evidence of a peculiar kind, obscure and without full insight and clarity. The fearful reality of the cross radiates outward; it is transfigured but not



really explained. The seal of strangeness remains in their meeting with the One Whom they have found again. The Risen Christ is really there, but "in another form" (Mark 16, 12). Again paradox is the best expression: an enlightened not-knowing, a blindness that sees, a look with blindfolded eyes.

So this sign also belongs to the peculiarly interwoven light and darkness of the mystery of the Resurrection, the mystery of a glory that surpasses all thought and measure. But because it belongs to a life beyond our world, the glory of the Risen Christ does not take away the suffering of humanity; rather it absorbs it. Neither does its power put to rout the forces of the world; it merely convicts them of powerlessness before invincible eternal love. Only after refraction through the dark medium, "world," does the brilliant ray of glory reach us.

This agrees precisely with Christian consciousness, which lives on faith in the Resurrection. Direct certitude of vision it cannot have. Instead it embraces the darkness of faith, which must suffice, and for which it is called blessed. "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20, 29). This Christian consciousness, thus blessed, is best described as the heart on fire. This term raises the painful suspense to the rank of a sign, one not arbitrarily chosen, but selected in obedience to a directive from above, from the Lord and perfecter of the faith by the Resurrection. As He is characterized forever by the wound in His side, so He wishes us to find Him above all in the sign of the burning heart. It bears witness to Christ the stranger rather than to Christ fully revealed. Among paschal images it corresponds best to the Christ Who

## THE SIGNS

meets His own, not in the brilliance of His glory but in the shadow of "another form."

This image is our assurance that we are following the path of the two wanderers to Emmaus with all its pain and happiness, the way of faith, which must go forward without fully understanding. This is still a time when much is hidden and held back. The collapse of the last barrier will come only at the end of time. We are not alone on this dark road. The Risen Christ is by our side, and that is why we are blessed as we follow our path. Within us is the constant witness to Christ in which we are not deceived: the burning heart.

**THE TRANSFIGURED WOUNDS**—In the Resurrection accounts of St. Luke and St. John, Christ refers to His wounds to confirm His identity with the One crucified; first on the evening of the Resurrection when He appeared to the "eleven" (Luke 24, 39), and then eight days later in the meeting with Thomas (John 20, 27).

At first glance it may seem that this gesture has no more than an identifying function. The text seems to say that these unmistakable marks upon His body lift the dazed senses of the disciples from the crushing reality of the cross to the unfathomable glory of their Master. That this is the most evident and the most urgent purpose of the account is not to be disputed.

But this identification does not exhaust the scene. That there is more to be understood is indicated by the fact that these biblical data live on in liturgical rite and symbol. The Easter candle, symbolizing Christ, also bears these wounds as a sign of recognition, indi-



cating that they are more essential identification than might first have been supposed when He showed them to the disciples who did not understand. They are marks of His identity which aid in recognition, but they also point to a far deeper truth—to His essential nature.

The true essence of Christ cannot be understood without reference to His love and power. To understand the truth of Christ through contemplation of the wounds is to find this truth whole, in its overflowing richness and mystery. From this the wounds take their meaning and clarify the deeper nature of the glorified Christ.

The wounds, however, contribute far more to the knowledge of Christ than proof of His identity. One must always approach the knowledge of Christ according to His unique nature. For knowledge of Christ follows a special law of its own, which does not admit the usual distinction between the act of knowing and the object known. Christ is never the "object" of "knowing." If, in defiance of the very mystery of Christ, He is forced into objectivity, the thought-approach to Him will be found walled shut. It is not as standing out from us (object) but as dwelling in our midst, embracing us with His wisdom and love, that He vouchsafes us a glimpse into His Being which is at once indwelling and all-embracing. Since He presents Himself to us to be known, it is He Who directs our reason to Him.

This inviolable structure of all knowledge of Christ is most powerfully affirmed by the wounds. Christ is not known in them exactly. Rather, He offers Himself to be known through them, as the scene with Thomas

at the close of St. John's Gospel (the original close) shows so forcefully. The account of the conversion of this last doubter demonstrates how all Christian knowledge is an entry into a previous being-known. The light-filled glance of the Risen Christ rests on every doubter as it did on this thick-blooded Apostle, and in every doubter Christ's loving look accompanies him all the way from skepticism to believing confession. In this Christ is not the objectivized fact, not mere evidence to be accepted, but He Himself is doer and war-ranter. He is not the object but the central subject of each knowing meeting with Him.

The imagery of the wounds brings this out doubly. First, in the wounds the form of the risen Christ is literally broken in upon, opened up to anyone seeking and loving, as witness the mystical stigmata of the Christian era. Secondly, in the wounds the guilt of man has been indelibly engraved in the body of the Redeemer. When we recognize Christ in His wounds as Thomas did, we find the sign of our estrangement from God already inscribed in the One we recognize, so that our non-knowing (which is part of this estrangement) is already overcome by the graciousness that makes us a part of the image. This is the super-functional aspect appearing even in the beginning, when the wounds were first understood as symbols of recognition. Having recognized in them the Risen One, we see also that in them we too are known.

But thus far we have recognized only the value of the wounds; now, as transition we regard the nature of the renewed acquaintance which begins with the sign of the glorified wounds. This recognition does not have the character of a steady progress to greater and



greater clarity, nor can it be described as a simple break-through from doubt to certainty. Rather, the knowledge won through the sign of the glorified wounds takes on the character of a victory. The truth of God triumphs over the blindness of man. This is the more true because the Risen Christ with a divine freedom accepts the conditions laid down by the doubter trusting only his senses. "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20, 25). Master of Himself, He completely masters the bewildered Apostle. The greatness of this victory is seen in the climactic close of the Gospel, where the converted doubter is made to speak the perfect confession of Christ known in His divine glory: "My Lord and my God" (John 20, 28).

Once more the scene changes, for this sign is always a paradox. Thomas is overcome, shipwrecked by his doubting demands. But he founders—in the words of Peter Wust—not on the truth of the Risen One but "into this truth." The victory of Christ over him is a victory in Christ. From his fall his confession arises at once, radiant as the Easter light after the night of the grave. It gives the theme to all who have experience of the Risen Christ: My Lord and my God.

But the deeper meaning of this sign is still to come. We find it by considering together the sign's two components: "glorified" and "wounds." There is much in common between this "composite view" and the basic law of all knowledge of Christ, except that now the accent is not on Him Who is known but upon us who know.

For the wounds remind Christ of His emptying Himself, of our guilt, and of how far we are from

## THE SIGNS

God. They are the stigmata of suffering and death engraved upon His glorified state. In concrete language, we sinners are indelibly "written into the body" of the glorified Christ. His wounds are an enduring rebuke to all of us. "Behold, he comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him" (Apoc. 1, 7).

The word "glorified" tells us: "we know that Christ, having risen from the dead, dies now no more, death shall no longer have dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life that he lives, he lives unto God" (Romans 6, 10). Christ has entered into the place proper to His essence, beyond space or time, free of any attachment to the world. There He lives the life of the divine Exception, that of the One Who turns undividedly to the heart of the Father.

Now if we look at both these things together we are struck again by that incomparable divine exclusiveness that nevertheless includes us. The expression: "the life that he lives, he lives unto God" (Romans 6, 10), reflects a new light when joined to the assurance: "He lives always to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7, 25). Christ did not stride across history as a man might cross a valley or ford a stream. What He took upon Himself He keeps forever, according to the teaching of the Fathers, even suffering and death, and us who are deserving of both. His glorified state of course prevents further suffering and death. But the will with which He undertook His suffering is with Him forever. This flaming will perpetuated in the glorified wounds is now transformed into the will to repeat in the community of the Mystical Body, His Church, the Passion which He once underwent alone. By His glori-



#### THE LIGHT OF THE LAMB

fied wounds the Risen One ever calls His followers to the delegated "fellowship in his suffering." This is the clear and unmistakable language God uses to speak to each of us. Our whole lifetime will pass before we can absorb all that He has to tell us in the sign-language of glorified wounds.

# *the* SPIRIT



THE LORD IS SPIRIT—Our views of Christ exalted are earthbound, limited to a narrow human viewpoint which does not bring out the brilliance of the actuality. Our looking at Christ would ultimately lose itself in a multiplicity of approaches if the Risen One did not Himself look at us and change the uncertainty of our seeing into the blessed certainty of being seen. In this divine glance the piecework perspective of figures and signs, of drawing near and drawing back, blends into the living unity of the mystery of Christ. In this glance the mystery does not rest in itself, as it must when announced in word and image; it comes to us and pertains to us. Beyond the limits of our seeing, it has become a mystery that sees, and it is thereby adapted to us.

The mystery of the Seeing Christ is represented in a miniature on the Sacramentarium of Limoges (about 1100). The image shows him enthroned above His followers, a glow of glory like sunlight about Him. Exalted above the heavens, He is still not far from the faithful. Rays of light from His eyes and ears pass through the gold ring of the aureola, where they separate into finer lines and proceed to the faithful gathered



in the room for the evening meal. He is the Giver of the Spirit. This is the name of that basic unity which holds up to our myopic vision the clear image of Christ and draws us with Him into that communicated image. The name that grows out of the consciousness of the Forty Days is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, or, in the language of the miniature of Limoges, Christ the Lord of the Spirit.

This raises a more difficult question: Who is the Spirit? The question is as old as Christian thought itself, as we can see in that disarming avowal of the disciples of Ephesus (from the hinterland of Ephesus, according to the Syrian *Peschitta*): "We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19, 2). This ignorance is not based solely on the missionary status of this particular congregation but is due also to the inadequacy of the human mind before this mystery. We find a suitable approach to, but of course not an adequate understanding of the generation of the Son by the Father in certain points of contact within our world of experience, but not for the spiration of the Holy Spirit through the Father and the Son. Our knowledge of this second interior communication in God remains abstract, leaving unfulfilled our need of some sort of representation from the world of the senses.

The unfulfilled need creates a seat of crisis. The crisis is aggravated by the tendency of reason to level and simplify, to bend all things into the narrow space dominated by thought and then to give out the results as genuine knowledge. It cannot be said that the divine message concerning the Holy Spirit has been immune from this process. Much of the output of pneumatology is read off on the inept example of the human

spirit and grossly carried over to the *Pneuma Hagion* in God, where it runs the danger of dislodging the mystery it would interpret precisely where that mystery bears witness to itself, to snuff it out where it would speak to the heart (see I Thess. 5, 19).

To avoid this danger we must pose the question of the Holy Spirit a little farther back and ask about His truth. The answer is given by Jesus Himself in His farewell address when He calls the promised Advocate the "Spirit of truth" (John 15, 26). A peculiar relationship to truth is here assigned to the Holy Spirit. The truth does not fit Him in such a way that, as in things, He must in thought be brought to truth. In the meeting with Him our thought has nothing to say or to give but has only to listen and to receive. And what it receives is truth itself. For the Spirit of God is not *in* truth, so that like other meanings He is dominated and surrounded by it. Truth is rather *in Him*; it is founded in Him and receives its light from Him.

Upon what is it founded? It is founded on a basis in which truth itself is no longer bright and open but a deed-thing, a fact to be accepted, namely, the *Verbum Caro Factum*. Even in extra-Christian thought about truth it is this sort of basis which gives to the true its full warranty, as suggested in Descartes' *Meditations* and discussed as a fundamental problem in Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*. But the final word about it is the expression: "The Lord is the spirit" (II Cor. 3, 17). In other words, the truth is grounded in Christ. He is the one foundation than which no other can be laid (I Cor. 3, 11). In the *beata passio*, in His victorious Resurrection from the night of death, He proves not only that He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Apoc. 13, 8) and therefore that He is the



original divine history of all being; He appears also as the fundamental fact which supports known being and the truth that makes being knowable.

The Spirit bears witness to this because He is the Spirit of Truth. He unveils the divine-human foundation of the true, and by so doing raises it above the skeptical objections and hesitations which it tries in vain to escape on its own initiative by self-illumination.

He brings truth to itself, in a way never before conceived. But external communication does not satisfy Him; He also brings truth immediately and inwardly. By His voice within the burning heart He makes the facts of salvation plain, and in them He anchors truth.

He thus helps us to specifically Christian thinking, thinking from Christ. His preoccupation with Christ is expressed by a second fundamental expression of the spirit-understanding in the New Testament: "He will glorify me, because he will receive of what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16, 14). Though the Spirit is an Other than the Father or the Son, He does not act upon us outside the glory that Christ gave to His own as He received it from the Father (John 17, 22). But He reaches us otherwise: as expression, communication, gift.

This is His work, the primordial deed of love: that the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, which before seemed the incommunicable property of God, is given to us through a flood of mercy as the seal and life-giving principle of our divine sonship. It is also the principle of our living encounter with truth. As we bear within us the witness of the Holy Spirit, we begin our speech not with the solitary and halting "I," but with those original Christian words: "No longer I, but Christ in me." We express an "I" that resounds with

the self-witness of Christ: "I am the truth," and which receives its enlightening power from Him.

Developing from this fundamental question concerning the truth of the Spirit is the further question of its inner framework. Man made in God's image cannot build up the truths of his mind and heart as a purely human construction, as a *mundus intelligibilis*. The ground on which it rests has a different building code, which is not the rigid structure of systematic thought but the living shape of organism. Over and above purely logical relationships there comes into play a new dialogue of thought and insight.

This dialogue is to be seen not only in the basis of knowledge, Christ, but also in the relationships between members whom He has joined to His Mystical Body. Just as the members in the Mystical Body are joined to Christ, so the meanings discovered by individuals are arranged into the whole body of Christian truth, where they complement and represent one another. As members they have a clearly defined duty, a functional position in the truth-organism as a whole. As opposed to the outer world of truth, which is a mere assembly of ideas proposed by unaided reason, there is this body of truth, born of the truth of Christ, which stands ready to liberate human thought from the rigidity of system and establish it in the organic order of freedom.

Again the question turns to the understanding of truth as brought about by the Spirit, and to its enlightening power, which is the visible fruit of the truth of Christ. If we understand the "bodily" structure of this truth, we have already found the answer. The countenance is an integral part of the body. In the countenance the life which courses in the body turns toward



the life of the spirit which exists side by side with it. This is a living relationship, so there is always the possibility of turning away. The self always proceeds from a closed state and is always prepared to return to it. But through the Spirit, truth shines for us in the countenance of Jesus Christ whenever we raise our eyes to Him. As He looks at us, we know that we have been lifted above all doubt. More than any subjective insight, His glance endows us with certitude. For the radiance which proceeds from the countenance of Christ not only provides the light by which we see, but also with ever greater clarity transforms us, who see, into the image of That which we see. (II Cor. 3, 18).

We can also understand in this living countenance that the life of Christ's truth is one which expresses itself in freely alternating gift and withdrawal, one that can close like a bud as well as open to a flower. The living face tells us why the glory of the Risen One is communicated sometimes in manifest images and sometimes in obscure signs.

The truth of the mystery of the Resurrection is not thereby rent asunder in irreconcilable contradictions. Rather the two opposites, understood as the turning towards and the turning away of the divine countenance, are conditions of each other. This tension, while it reminds us of the seasonal change from winter frost to summer fecundity, is by no means a natural-vital phenomenon, but the free proper life of the true and the holy, with a certain resemblance to the rhythm of nature. It expresses the freedom of the Risen Christ, the law of whose presence is the mysterious saying: "I go away and I am coming to you" (John 14, 28).

He knows full well that this idea of His coming in

going away, of His presence in absence, His glory in shame, His power in weakness, will throw His disciples into incomprehending sadness. They would wish rather to gain certainty and then not move from it. So He at once tells of the Advocate who will turn their depression into joy, the Holy Spirit. Even when the glory of Christ is obscured and withdrawn, they will learn from the Spirit to breathe the everlasting love which, whether it comes or goes, gives or takes away, remains unchanging love, one with the essence of God. It glows with the countenance of truth, which is its light and its power to give light. From this love it comes that truth's light transforms us into the great image we see.

**THE INWARD WITNESS**—The Holy Spirit does not contribute something new and different to the glory of the Risen Christ. He only interprets and presents it differently, as glory that turns toward us and is adapted to us. To appreciate this we must pursue this act of condescension to its goal, our inner selves. For like the other gifts this first and fundamental gift of the Spirit, which is Christ, the Lord of the Spirit, is intended for our interior selves. In our hearts the Spirit works the miracle of the Christ of inwardness, of "Christ in us."

Examined more closely, this indwelling is found to mirror that fundamental process by which the Spirit founds the universality of the true upon the fact of the Word made flesh. This is a mirrored image from which one must not expect exact parallels. The planting of the true and the dwelling of Christ within the soul is stamped with reflection of the Word made flesh, but it takes place for entirely different ends. By being



based in the *Verbum caro factum* the truth in our souls is strengthened and brought to its true being. On the other hand, by entering into our hearts, Christ, the unique firstborn and only-begotten, passes on to us what makes Him unique. He wishes to be entirely ours. If in this mystical being-in-us He is also by necessity of His very nature at the same time true to Himself, with all his unique inner self-knowledge, He is so for our sake. On each of us His glorious self-knowledge falls and invites us: Know yourself in me! (Augustine).

But in the very dissimilarity between its two parts the fundamental analogy with the basis of truth appears. The communication of the Holy Spirit helps us to conscious maturity in faith, to the coming of age in Christ, and thereby the indwelling Spirit Himself achieves His purpose in the world, the unfolding of His transcendent life in the mature form of the Church. The image of the *Corpus veritatis* is reflected in its original, the *Corpus mysticum*.

Thus the mystical indwelling of Christ brought about in us by the Spirit is surrounded by a larger unity of which we can have only a co-knowledge, and which yet finds its "place" and its full meaning also by taking place within us. It is the indwelling of Christ in the center of His Church. "We in Christ" counterbalance "Christ in us." This is the source of the stream that carries the glory of the Risen Christ to us, and thither it also ebbs once more. In its coming and going we experience the heartbeat of the divine life as it flows among us.

Like every great happiness, the inward-turning glory of Christ through the Holy Spirit is easily bruised. An important condition of this happiness is

that it be left within the supernatural order to which it belongs; we must therefore be aware of that order and learn to weigh it carefully. If our sensitivity to the riches of the indwelling Christ (Col. 1, 27) and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge He brings is not to degenerate into mere good feeling, we must constantly recall what the inward-turning witness actually gives and guarantees. We must be absorbed in the peremptory "I will" spoken over us by the Lord standing on the threshold of the two worlds, as He asks that we become witnesses and partakers of His glory with the Father (John 17, 24).

We must understand this order in its context. The indwelling of Christ, in particular, must be interpreted with reference to His exaltation. Christ appears in His in-being as One exalted above the heavens, but Who in His transfiguration still turns to us. He Who was once rejected now embraces the whole world and is the foundation of the cosmos, bearing up our very existence as its ground and center. If He holds seven stars in His right hand (Apoc. 1, 16), He still lays this same right hand on each of us (Apoc. 1, 17) to strengthen and raise us up. He has entered into the brilliant sphere of eternal wisdom, He Who was misunderstood, but now He is to be known by all. He is to be our God-given wisdom (I Cor. 1, 30), the source of insight into the world and ourselves. At the right hand of God He lives eternally giving Himself to the Father. Yet He embraces us all in His loving will, because He lives ever to make intercession for us. As He promises in His high-priestly prayer, He gives us the glory into which He entered that we may be one with the Father as He is (John 17, 22).

Happiness carries special obligations. We may not



be deaf to the duty which Jesus imposes with His promise; namely, that we dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly to the mystery of life through the Spirit. He commands nothing which He, as Lord of the Spirit, has not practiced. He Himself is the law of living and doing under the impulse of the Spirit. As He distributes in the Spirit that glory of His that fills all things (Eph. 4, 10), as He pours out His love into all hearts (Romans 5, 5), and lets His glance fall as flames of fire (Acts 2, 3), so He moves us in turn to the brotherly service of the word that enlightens and the love that shares. He wants us to bear witness to others of what we have received from His fullness. Trimmed down to human capacity, the work of the Spirit is our work. "But when the Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me. And you also bear witness, because from the beginning you are with me" (John 15, 26-27). What was told us in darkness we are to speak in the light; what was whispered in our ears we are to preach from the house-tops (Matt. 10, 27).

There must be a genuine turning-outward to manifest the inward-turning. Communication, of course, must not infringe on recollection; expression must not impoverish. It will not if its basis of activity is the Risen Christ, for He dwells with His faithful without leaving His place at the right hand of the Father. He pours out His gifts on the Church without ceasing to live for God alone. On the contrary, it is one undivided act of eternal living by which He turns to the Father and accepts us. This is the richness of His sharing, that He includes all of us whom He has known and loved as He leans on the heart of the Father.

This is what our testimony means; this is the kind of love we are to share. We walk in the spoken profession of our faith in Christ, an outward movement. But we do not get away from ourselves. This is the very opposite of estrangement from self. For in the dialogue of faith more exists than what is said and those who say it. The One Who is meant is there, both as the central meaning of all that is spoken and as the heart of the gathering that bears witness to Him. His presence is the joy-giving answer to the acknowledgment of Him.

The same is true of the love which is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who is given to us. It can be only a giving and forgiving love, rendering service, not self-seeking and vainglorious. Such a love would seem to disperse the centering of the inward-turning witness. But this fear must yield to reality—a reality which bears the stamp of the self-realization of the Risen Christ. Again this is the opposite of dispersion, as St. Paul assures us from His own experience in channelling his love for Christ through apostolic zeal. "I have the right to feel so about you all, because I have you in my heart . . ." (Phil. 1, 7). The more deeply love expresses itself and the more selflessly it espouses the cause of others, the more interior it becomes both to itself and to others. It is by giving that love is enriched. It is by serving that it is ennobled. Love's nature is to bestow itself. Love follows the lead of the Risen One, Who by communicating Himself in the Spirit to the world left behind, wins this world for Himself.

The glory that we receive is meant to give its light. We may not bury it in ourselves, or hide it under the basket of a "private" Christianity. It is intended for



this: that we may be one, as the Risen Christ is one with the Father (John 17, 22). Thus the task is assigned and the goal set, the goal of unity for all who reflect the All-in-One of God. We are driven by the Spirit to bear witness and so make room for the Spirit in the world. For we bear witness in Him Who communicated Himself to all, that He might draw all to Himself.

**THE OTHER ADVOCATE**—The full outward expression of the love we possess within is a blessed thing, but it is sorely hindered by the internal resistance of human nature's smug self-sufficiency, which is a worse enemy of love than hatred. For in hatred love suffers only the pain of meeting men to whom the meager light they can kindle for themselves is more important than the light from God. But by internal resistance, the very will to communication is cut short of its goal. Thrown back upon itself it becomes a sorry fragment, a burden to itself, and an annoyance to the person it vainly tries to approach.

Even in the natural order nothing is more painful than love unreturned. How much heavier the shadows lie over the message of love offered by the Spirit when there is no understanding and no response! The consequence is not merely a human crisis following a vain endeavor; but is incomparably more grave: a divine want. The world congealed in itself has rejected not the human witness, but the Author of the testimony.

A divine crisis can only mean a crisis in the relationship between God and the world. The relationship to God on which all created being rests degenerates. The revealed God seems hidden, the loving God cast aside, the living God pronounced dead. This is what hap-

pened after the farewell sermon of Jesus. So distorted is the sense of the holy in a world-enclosed existence that it is precisely when confronted by God's purest testimony that blind hatred of God flares up with the greatest violence. It goes so far that the persecutor who murders the messengers of faith thinks he is doing a work of religion (John 16, 2).

The word "crisis" here truly follows its first definition, that of judgment. Still it is not a judgment in the sense of a judicial decision of God upon the world, as the New Testament interprets crisis. It is not true judgment at all but a perversion: the presumption of the world to sit in judgment over God and His actions. These are the troubles the Master foresees for His disciples as He bids them farewell. Cited before the tribunal of the world, they are accused of godlessness—the favorite subterfuge of unbridled lust for revenge.

But now the hour of divine intervention has struck. From His divine glory the Risen Christ, our "advocate with the Father," sends "another advocate" to aid His followers. Nothing new takes place that is not already part of that drive of the Spirit toward the Christian confession of faith. It is only that the inward-turning Witness turns outward now to take the position of counsel in the case being brought against Christianity. His conduct of the trial reverses the proceeding: "When he has come, he will convict the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment" (John 16, 8).

A dramatic turn of events! The stage-play—for the process was nothing more when the "world" presided—suddenly becomes a tribunal. The blind and presumptuous pose of judge collapses under the judgment of God. The plaintiff world is sent to the defendant's chair, its pretended piety exposed as *the* sin. "If I had



not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin" (John 15, 22).

This turn of events is so disrupting that even those to be protected fall under the shadow of the divine accusation. They also feel the divine justice, since the Risen Christ is taken back to the Father and withdrawn from their view. So they do penance for a fault more circumstantial than moral, more for their presence in the world than for any entanglement in its ways. To that extent the atonement they undergo has more the character of delay than punishment. It consists in the "not yet" that casts its shadow over Christian existence as long as this world lives in time.

The full might of the Advocate sent by God both to vindicate and to condemn falls upon the author of evil, the father of lies. He is the real adversary of the Spirit. It is he, the source of all ill, who spawned the perversion erupting in the world's case against the confessors of Christ. He, the prince of this world, "is already judged" (John 16, 11). His sentence is pronounced from the moment the Spirit enters the proceedings. By His simple presence the herald of divine truth banishes the demonic spectre of lies that flourished in a self-sufficient, vainglorious world.

The Advocate is not content to free Christendom from the oppression of the moment. His immediate service is part of an overflowing divine self-communication. We can only point out the direction this "more" may take. But it is certain that the Spirit, by exceeding the strict need, by overcoming the negative through positive creation, brings unmistakable proof of His coming forth from God. For it is the mark of God to overcome nothingness, in whatever form it

appears, through a creative act—out of Himself. Even where He rejects and judges, He remains the Creator and the giver of Grace, and does not allow the law of action to be imposed by the powers of negation.

This is the outstanding attribute of the reign of the Spirit. But here the revelations of the departing Lord no longer guide us. "Many things yet I have to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16, 12). Only the Spirit remains to reveal the creative might which will unfold as He bears witness, and He does so gradually, step by step (John 16, 13). But this much is clear: His action will touch our hearts. At one moment He defends us before the forum of the world. Then He takes on our weakness and, as our representative, beseeches the Knower of hearts. Again He bears witness to our timid conscience that we are the children of God. For it is not His desire to hold us in tutelage while He acts as counsel for us; His advocacy is to lead us to Christian maturity. Once we have reached the consciousness of divine sonship we shall appear for ourselves, each for himself and each for the other. Then the coalition of the enemies of faith will be confronted by a different and a stronger unity: the community in the Spirit. It will be more than a muster of religious defenses. A community brought about through the Spirit, it comprises His field of influence and action; it is the workshop of His wonders. Here the testimony of Christ, rejected by the world, does its work. It has long echoed unheard in the wilderness of the world, but here it will be the living bread handed daily from one to the other in the agape of love.

Thus the interior possession of Christ becomes the forming power of the whole. The "Christ in us" vouchsafed by the Spirit is complemented by the "We



in Christ," the avowal of those immersed in the Spirit. This is the interior blessing of the Passion of Christ. In the surfeit of attack and trouble the Church ripens to full self-knowledge and maturity. It is the Spirit Who defends her against the accusations of the world and leads her to the fullness of her coming of age in Christ—leads the Church as Christ-living-on toward final form.

The martyr Stephen was the first to meet head-on that fanatical pseudo-religiosity which is really the God-hating "world" opposing the man of God. In Stephen as the spokesman for the young Christian congregation, the young community is accused. Suffering as the Spirit's representative, Stephen knew that advocacy of the Spirit which is meant for the whole of troubled Christendom—advocacy in the sign of victorious death: *dux vitae mortuus regnat vivus*. As we learn from the farewell prayer of Jesus, the witnesses of faith are not sheltered from the storm of hatred. Stephen is handed over to the fury of his adversaries who are grinding their teeth. The reign of terror unleashed against him takes its course to the bloody end.

But inwardly Stephen is lifted above this outbreak of inhumanity. Though he cannot escape the power that erupts from below, he is already gathered to the select realm of the Risen Christ. In him is fulfilled the prayer of Jesus: "I do not pray that thou take them out of the world, but that thou keep them from evil" (John 17, 15). Over the storm of violence which in the next instant will sweep him into the deep, the martyr sees "the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7, 56). No longer "sitting" (Mark 16, 19) but standing, the glori-

## THE SPIRIT

fied Christ has risen from the throne of His glory to stand by His champion and bring him home.

Heaven and earth are included in the holy circle which unites the first witness of the faith with Christ who consummates that faith. But even in this all-inclusive sweep, the Spirit of mystic inwardness is still master. The glorified Christ inclines to the aid of Stephen and confirms the inward-possession, which "full of the Holy Spirit" Stephen witnesses and seals with his blood.

Confirmed from above, the "Christ in us" presses on towards its destiny: "We in Christ," as can be seen in the martyr, especially in that most elementary expression of life, the countenance. "Then all who sat in the Sanhedrin, gazing upon him, saw his face as though it were the face of an angel" (Acts 6, 15). The face as of an angel means a face in which the power of the world to come shines through, a face in which the harsh lines of temporal stress are already reformed by the eternal way of being in which God is the thinker of all knowledge, the lover in all love, the all-embracing self within every "I." This angelic light in Stephen's countenance is the martyr's victory, and the symbol of that Christian power which is greater than the world. It is a bright victory—even brighter because it shines through the abyss of death.



# *the* GIFTS



JOY—The Spirit Jesus promises is the living communication of Himself to His followers. The tongues of fire express the flaming glance of the Risen Christ, and in the Spirit's advocacy on behalf of the troubled Church the power of Christ is at work. As the bride, the recipient of this largess, the praying Church calls the Spirit the "dispenser of gifts" (Sequence). The Lord on the evening of His departure ascribes this character to Him when He calls Him the living reminder of His words (John 14, 26) and the herald of His glory (John 16, 14).

It is the essential function of the Spirit to make communicable what Christ possesses in uncommunicated singularity, to expand to general application what is unique and unrepeated in Him, to impart to His concrete existence the rank of universality, to include each and every one in the exclusiveness that binds Him to the Father. "He will glorify me, because he will receive of what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16, 14). He turns toward us that eternal act of giving by which the Son gives Himself to the Father. That is what He is doing as He announces Christ as the one given to us for our salvation and that of the whole

world (John 3, 16), and, earlier, as that which is divinely given in existence itself (Prologue).

Christ's will to communication enters into the manifold needs of man in many different ways. The great river of the Spirit branches off into the brooks and streams of the individual gifts. But even the least of these gifts—the First Epistle to the Corinthians refers to a difference of rank—contains the whole. Christ is present in each gift, for He is given with it, and in each there is the light of His countenance. All the glory and beauty and promise made visible by the images against the dark background of world-night is given to our poor selves in the gifts. Therefore it is by looking back at the images that we measure what the Spirit apporions us out of the fullness of Christ. This is especially the case with the gift which sets the tone of the Easter consciousness: *joy*.

How little this spiritual joy has in common with the natural high feeling that goes by the same name is shown by what happened after the Ascension. "And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24, 52). In this report, cause and effect seem to have abandoned their natural usage. The Lord has withdrawn from the sight of His faithful followers, but leaves joy in their hearts. Their very consolation is the pain of parting. The same inversion of sentiment is reported of Peter and John after their "warning" by the Sanhedrin (Acts 5, 41), and of Paul and Silas in their imprisonment at Philippi (Acts 16, 25). Joy and the song of praise are their answer to outrage and affliction.

It is not that the joyful disciples descending from Mount Olivet did not feel the separation. But their hearts, which were possessed and enlightened by



Christ, were wiser than their senses. In the wisdom of their burning hearts they realized that the departure of the Lord, while it deprived them of His sensible company, bore with it the assurance of His return and abiding nearness: "I go and I come to you." This knowledge overtakes the pain before it can overwhelm them and changes it to enlightened joy. Later, in the same way, the arrested Apostles feel the shame of their dishonor (Acts 5, 41; 16, 37), but they bear shame and stripes as the sign of their election, and they have joyful hearts. "Henceforth let no man give me trouble, for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body" (Gal. 6, 17).

Joy breaks through from dark backgrounds of sadness. It is a joy purified by tears, joy overcoming pain and able to ripen in purity and perfection. "You shall have sorrow, but your sorrow shall be turned to joy" (John 16, 20). "These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15, 11).

Perfect joy must be knowing joy. As a rule, the high time of natural enjoyment is the hour of forgetfulness. We have to close our eyes to the sphinx, to the sour face of life, to give ourselves to joy uninhibited. It is not so with the joy given by the Risen Christ, awakened in us by His Spirit. It may not forget. To be full and abiding it must remember its origin, which is, as the farewell sermon assures us, the interior echo of Christ's communication of Himself, the living reflection of His truth in the heart.

Like the joy of the Risen Christ, His truth falls under a different law than natural knowledge. It comes to light, not in abstract conclusions, but in the personal countenance of Jesus, so it cannot be viewed neutrally,

from a cool distance. It calls for loving participation, a personal yes, and it imparts a great deal more than just a certain amount of insight, important though insight may be. By it we enter into the living presence of the glorified Christ, who meets us bodily in His truth; for He not only communicates truth, but is the truth by His very essence.

Now the seal of this meeting is joy. In the highest sense what St. Paul says of charity is verified here: it "rejoices in the truth" (I Cor. 13, 6). As love is the impetus toward knowledge of Christ, joy is its recompense. Joy is the Christian experience of evidence. In joy of heart we see that our question about Christ is not without answer; in fact, we see that we were able to ask it only because His glorified countenance drew the question out of us, so that He could answer it by revealing Himself little by little.

The source of this joy reminds us of the time in which we are, the time of the present world, the hour of images, not yet the time of fullness of vision. To which of the images does joy correspond? From which does it flow?

The Apocalypse gives the answer in its descriptions of the Lamb's retinue and the nuptial city. In an immense symphony of heavenly and earthly sound the firstborn of God and the "Lamb" sing a "new canticle" which no one can sing but they (14, 2). They are jubilant because as followers they have come to understand the mystery of the glorified Christ. They sing the hymn of joy of the consecrated.

In the closing passages the Seer discloses the glory of the city of God, the bride of the Lamb, at the end of time. On the ruins of the world which has been judged, the creative will of God sets up the place of



inalterable blessedness and joy. Here He Himself sweeps away the last traces of pain and sorrow; with His own hand He washes the tears from their eyes (21, 4). This new Jerusalem is the locale of a clarity that is perfect and all-encompassing. It has no further need of the light of creatures, for it is illumined by God; its light is the Lamb (21, 23).

From this city the Church, come of age now, utters its first mature word. It is the cry of the Christian spirit, grown up in faith, hope, and love, as it first awakens and pays humble heed to the Spirit bearing witness to our spirits that we are the sons of God. It is the nostalgic "Come," with which the Spirit and the bride ask for the parousia of the Perfecter (22, 17).

If we follow this invitation and speak this word in unity with the mature Church, we shall see, in new understanding of self, how true joy has its roots in the truth of the glorified Christ. We see it as the interior reappearance of the mystery of God hidden for ages but unveiled for us in Christ—a reappearance only, for the revelation occurs first in the image of the Lamb—a mediate image, not yet a knowing face-to-face.

Perfect joy means joy that *gives*. Because it stems from the gracious self-communication of the Glorified Christ, a gift from His glory, Christian joy dwells in the will to communicate. "Joy to you in the Lord at all times; once again I wish you joy. Give proof to all of your courtesy. The Lord is near" (Phil. 4, 4). The more we lift our eyes to Christ, the Father of the world to come, above the distorted shapes of passing time, the more keenly we are drawn to joy. But it is a joy which bears the stamp of giving, of spending the self. To enlighten others, it must of course first transform itself. This is right in the natural feeling of joy,

all wrapped up in itself. Joy is repose in fulfilled and blessed inwardness, but to have promise for the future it must take on another form, one organically in touch with the world about it: it must dis-close itself.

This it does when it becomes kindness, for kindness is joy that looks to fellow men and reaches out to them and is therefore the perfection of joy. It is not without significance that the Apocalyptic images of happiness in the light of the Lamb are always images of community. The happy "I" is but the beginning of joy; its goal is the "We" showered with this same singular happiness. What joy knows and cherishes as its inner strength must be made clear to everyone: The Lord is nigh!

His Resurrection was the first step toward the renewed creation of the world, then His "I will" asked for us all the glory that is coming to Him, and in the nostalgic "come" His Church asks, for all of us again, His nearness. Through Christian kindness we assure one another of all this in the very face of a world estranged from God. Through kindness we draw the anxious and troubled into the enlightened and confident circle. Kindness is joy in service; kindness is due service to one another in joy (II Cor. 1, 24).

Perfect joy means *abiding* joy. "And therefore you have sorrow now; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one shall take from you" (John 16, 22). Again and again human experience attests to the instability of happiness and joy. They appear as preludes to an unworldly harmony, exceedingly frail and condemned to fade quickly in the hard cacaphony of the factual world.

If Christian joy has permanence, it is because its Author is always near. Under the garment of the gifts



the presence of the Giver is tangible. He indicates this when He promises His followers that they shall see Him again, and that this reunion will be the source of joy forever. For whoever sees Him is also seen by Christ in His permanence. When the glance of the glorified Christ rests upon a man, his life is illumined. Though on the surface there is still much that is unclear, much that is obscure and troubled, yet the greatest weight has been lifted, the anxiety that he might be left to his own inadequate powers in interpreting the world and life. This is not a passing mark of favor but stable and enduring, as befits the immutability of the glorified Lord. Neither is it an offer of help that remains outside the helper, as if someone had reached out a hand. In His glance the glorified Christ gives Himself. By looking at us He clothes us with His glory, without taking away our present state.

His glance is God's "yes" to the world, a divine assent in Christ to its salvation, an assent endowed with sight now, and brought to us by the Spirit who scrutinizes the deep things of God. In this "yes" our joy takes anchor in a sound foundation. Made firm in Christ, this joy, in itself the tenderest and most fragile of all things, allows the divine "yes" to gain power over us and draw into our hearts. There it lives, stronger than the deepest skepticism or the bitterest experience in life, enabling us to meet what comes with open eyes, with full accord, and with hope.

Finally perfect joy means *enthusiastic* joy. In a matter-of-fact world, with its atmosphere of supercooled feelings, the word is not lightly spoken. But the motif of enthusiasm belongs to the essence of joy. It is significant that joy is counted among the fruits ripened

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by the breath of the Holy Spirit. He first awakens them in our hearts, and since joy needs to look back to the glorified Christ, because it reflects Him and makes Him present, so must it be breathed through by the Spirit, because He bestows it, and it cannot exist without Him. It must be a spiritual joy, in harmony with its origin. Then it is itself and bursts with the power that slumbered before.

What this means is shown by the prayer experience of the young community in Jerusalem after its encounter with the Jewish authorities. As answer to their entreaty, "the place where they had assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4, 31). It was in the sign of terror that they found courage. As the ground under their feet quaked and every earthly assurance failed, they understood the reality of the world to come. Through the cracked walls of their existence came light and strength from the glory of the Risen Christ. They are seized, gripped; they have a boldness which bursts the chains of fear.

To be seized, and to be bold—on both of these, Christian enthusiasm feeds. It is only when we are deeply stirred that we know how to give place to the Christ within us. When we are trembling with rapture we overcome ourselves to re-express in Christ our separate identities and to subject to His yoke our urge to be self-made. In that instant the very stream of our life is reversed; a feeling for the eternal divinely-shaped life takes hold of us. Our beggar's rags, the garb as exiles from the Lord (II Cor. 5, 6), fall from us and we realize that we are guests. Every question, every wish is mute. For the Spirit that has come over



us, chooses us, and runs through our souls, is greater than anything we were going to ask or could have wished.

To this radiant Spirit are entrusted the highest things: trail-blazing insights and the decisions to carry them out. Such insights should never be left to cool to mediocrity. Beware lest they be extinguished or suppressed! The nature of the Spirit—and here enthusiasm harks back to kindness—is to give light. Enthusiasm that proceeds to bear witness is called boldness, in boldness joy becomes persuasive, and it recognizes whom it must thank and it makes the proper acknowledgment, which then reaches out to the most distant hearer to lure him from estrangement to inwardness, first of all to that inwardness with himself that he had lost.

For the indwelling of Christ always points out the place where we can be really with ourselves, along with that in-being with others which exists where Christ is the center. This is the goal of undivided joy which boldness engenders. For here the enthusiasm of many is united in one Spirit in Whom all utter the word of mature joy: Come!

PEACE—Among the fruits of the Spirit enumerated in the letter to the Galatians, peace follows joy (5, 22), and both are promised as the legacy of the departing Lord. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14, 27). Together with joy, peace is the shared glory of the Risen Christ; it is the "fruit" of the Spirit and a "gift" out of the fullness of the Lord of the Spirit. Like joy, it harks back to the images which take form in the gifts and carries us forward into the manner of

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being that is to come, in which Christ is our life and His countenance our sun.

Peace is distinguished from joy in its relationship to the content of the gifts and to their Giver. If joy is the inward reflection of His glory, peace is His gracious presence among all whom His joy animates. So peace completes the work of joy. Peace is the name of our life in Christ, the name which we call upon in our tattered condition, in the troubles of the hidden conflict of the heart as well as of open enmity among men and peoples.

This name is Faith's answer to the unquenchable longing of the human heart for reconciliation of all contradictions, for abiding harmony. This name also has power to put truth into worldly talk of peace, which of itself only flounders about in wishful dreams and dangerous utopias.

For the truth and reality of peace are Christ. Where there is honest discussion of peace, and where it finds entry, something so pure and unworldly takes place that it could not possibly be drawn from existing things but could only be awaited for and accepted from above. Only the readiness for peace and the longing for it is our affair, not the founding of it. Of peace can be said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in the midst of them" (Matt. 18, 20). In those who desire peace Christ dwells as the living medium of their agreement, their spiritual harmony, as Origen interprets the passage. Christ gives and maintains openness of mind in them, offering Himself as the free reward of this openness, as a precious fruit surpassing all expectation.

Only Christ establishes peace, for if we look for the particular aspect of the Risen Lord that corresponds



to His effecting peace, we find it in the image of the Good Shepherd. As the shepherd, Christ accepts His own to give them fullness of life in the hiddenness of His love. Under His shelter they already share in the repose of fulfillment. To find Christ is to enter into peace, and to desire peace is to follow, knowingly or unknowingly, the footsteps of Christ; it is to further the special lifework of the Good Shepherd. "And coming, he announced the good tidings of peace to you who were afar off (heathens), and of peace to those who were near (Jews), because through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2, 17). The reconciliatory suffering which He undergoes in our stead as "shepherd and guardian" of souls brings about the world-encompassing peace of God.

In this He is only putting into action what He already is, the Word, one in essence with God and His image, who by self-communication puts us on good terms with Himself, so that in Him we find true and lasting peace. For this reason we say Christ does not "give" us peace as something apart from its giver; He gives us Himself in His peace, and remains present in it. As the approach to the Father cannot be sought apart from Christ, neither can the peace to which it leads. He lives in His gift, giving Himself.

To take the measure of this peace of Christ we must go step by step from the gift to the Giver. To speak of the inward blessedness of peace is indeed something of a problem. The common basis of understanding should be the actual realization of peace in both speaker and listener, and even then the explanation would be far outstripped by the reality, for of peace of heart it is said that it "surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4, 7). Otherwise the words of explanation would

have to possess the power to make present what they name. The meaning of peace does not allow any other clarification, and to speak of it essentially is to impart it. This, of course, does not lie within the compass of words copying human experience. At best they can speak of peace only from the viewpoint of privation and longing, preparing the way. They have but a service function, to the end that peace, when it comes, may reign (Col. 3, 15).

Where peace reigns the human heart has passed from seeking to finding, from asking to knowledge, from desire to possession. Peace does not quench the spiritual fire that leads to these questions and desires, but frees it from disturbing haste and restlessness. In the strain of effort it brings the certainty of winning. Peace makes us simple, sure of our goal, carefree. By giving us a foretaste of perfection, it offers, on agitated waters, something of the untroubled security of the child. It renders us both mature and freshly energetic, both knowing and guileless, both strong and tender, the one quality complementing the other. This it can do because it halts the stream of events and weds future and past to a pure present. Where peace holds sway, time holds its breath.

Peace gathers what life scatters. Like the rainbow, the sign of God's peace after the deluge, it hovers over the contradictions of life. The alien is made a friend, what was torn is made whole, wounds are healed. It brings reconciliation into a world of contradictions, and through it the forces of unity triumph over the worldwide forces of disruption. Amid breakdowns and failures it gives a foretaste of ultimate success. It is the harbinger of the perfection to come.

In this world full of brave beginnings and loose ends,



we have to be told what completion and perfection mean. St. Paul speaks of this to the Thessalonians, not by way of definition, but, more important, as a prayer. "And may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved sound, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5, 23). To the Philippians he adds, "And may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4, 7).

The consummation brought about by peace comes from the farthest reaches—from God Who penetrates our most remote feeling and thought. That is the home of peace. It is great as the heart of God and broad as His wisdom.

On this level lies the key to understanding the work of peace. Peace is protective. Unfathomed by thought, it takes our thought under its wing. Inexhaustible, it fills our striving and our longing to the brim. It defends our hearts from the dissipation of unrestrained desire and our thoughts from the abyss of the meaningless.

Even with this its shepherd function is not finished. Peace protects by revealing to us its own truth, no longer attainable by our faculty of thought. This truth is Christ Himself, "He is our peace" (Eph. 2, 14). The miracle of His peace is the miracle of His indwelling. He visits us and we are at home in Him. The heart expands and a basically changed consciousness awakens. Dwelling in the peace of Christ we learn the measure of our Christian being, the depths of our hearts, the breadth of our thoughts. Shepherded and protected by the peace of Christ we finally find ourselves.

But it is also true that if we live in peace we shall no

longer live for ourselves. Something truly great has come down to us and taken away all narrow self-seeking. At home now in Christ we are in harmony with all creation; nothing can trouble us. Our fellow men, whom Christ has bought, we bear wrapped in our hearts; nothing they do can embitter us. Possessed by Christ, we know that we are one with the image of Christ; nothing can separate us from His love. We understand everything in terms of this belonging to Christ and hiddenness in Him; we see everything in a new light. The mask falls from man and things. Whatever is, is something *given*, given to man. True, it is but a loan that wants to be returned through his hands to the wellspring of all being.

In peace man lives, as much as he is able, that eternal moment in which the Risen Christ takes possession of the glory which He had with the Father from the foundation of the world, so that in His glory He might subject Himself to the Father, "that God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15, 28). This is the perfection of peace, and at the same time the height from which peace forever descends.

When a man lives that moment, he sees both the goal and the way, His way, as well as the obligation that comes with the gift of peace. In that ultimate "God, all in all" he finds the pattern of how things should be, and could be through peace. Thus he derives the law of his behavior from the inward experience of peace. All that he says and does serves to bring others to where he has come, to security in Christ. But there is an unrest which remains, for he remembers how many there are who live outside his own joyful repose. So the blessedness of peace urges him on to the still greater blessedness of those who



work for peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called children of God" (Matt. 5, 9).

**FREEDOM**—In the basic Christian description of the Spirit we find an ode to *freedom*: "Now the Lord is the spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (II Cor. 3, 17). It is true that in its perfection the glorious freedom of the children of God belongs to the future order of things which must still be brought to the fore: "Now we are the children of God, but it has not yet appeared what shall be" (I John 3, 2).

As of now this freedom still lies behind a hedge of restrictions, its brilliance veiled under the servile form of law. Even now, however, this law is no longer law for its own sake—"That the offense might abound," in the pessimistic phrase of the Epistle to the Romans (5, 20)—but it is law redeemed from itself, the perfect law of freedom (James 1, 25). As the Risen Christ retains the marks of His Passion, so the freedom He gives will bear the sign of slavery throughout time. But as the glorified wounds prove Him victorious, so the gift of His freedom proves itself in its very bondage. Hung upon the cross of the law, it is victorious over the slavish spirit of legalism. By obedience and service it really becomes what it is: the freedom through which Christ makes us free.

The paradox of the glorified wounds shows how the freedom effected by the Spirit differs from natural freedom. It is not the birth of Christ but His victory on the cross that brings us His freedom, for on the cross He bursts through the enclosed and estranged natural world in which natural freedom moves, and unshackles life so that it can dedicate itself to God. In

the basic meaning of Christian freedom what stands out is not a sort of idea, which in the style of liberalistic thought can be ground out in speeches and imposed by force. In essence it bears the stamp of a living person, Christ the conqueror. Where in the Spirit He takes hold of hearts, there is freedom; and where freedom reigns there He truly reigns.

Peace makes Christ present as dwelling with us and protecting us in His love. In freedom we know Him as victor over bias and constraint. We see this first and fundamentally in our relationship with Christ Himself, in our meeting with Him. The man who has gained his freedom sees Christ in a different way: not in the glare of world-bound viewpoints, but in Christ's own light. He sees the brightness of divine glory in the face of the Lord. Therefore St. Paul represents the breakthrough into Christian freedom as the removal of the veil that covers the heart and prevents recognition of the truth of salvation (II Cor. 3, 14).

Christian freedom means, therefore, to be absorbed into the truth of Christ. This absorption has nothing to do with intellectual understanding of truth. For the truth of Christ is not in the intellect but in Him; its light is the light of His countenance. He to whom Christ turns His face and who knows Christ is looking at him, is free. Raised up to a relationship with God that surpasses creation, he is lifted above the bondage of creation. He is above all worldly goals and knows why he exists. This is the meaning of Jesus' promise to the believing Jews: "the truth will make you free" (John 8, 32).

Among the witnesses of the Forty Days, the Emmaus disciples had the most significant experience of this. The Risen Christ Himself loosed the bonds that



blinded their hearts by showing Himself the interpreter and the Interpretation of the Messianic sense of the Scriptures. At the same time the essence of Christian freedom is set apart very clearly from the natural understanding of freedom, the freedom to change and to exchange. It was supposed to solve this quandary; the actual solution turns out to be quite different. It is the discovery both of what the travelers to Emmaus had not understood and of their unknown companion, that gave them what they were seeking. And now that they saw with burning hearts, they realized that they were free, free of the compulsion of blind melancholy and disappointment, open to the view of Christ's glory and able to act on this knowledge. The blindfolds fall from their eyes, the bonds from their will. What they had tried to leave behind becomes their goal once more, now that they see it with enlightened eyes and touch it with unfettered hearts. In that very hour they rise up and go back to Jerusalem (Luke 24, 33).

This action reveals the change that has taken place in them more clearly than words. But expressed in words, this change of heart shows us that Christian freedom is only in a derived and remote sense a freedom to otherness. Its original and essential meaning is freedom to being, a freedom that is realized in practical dedication to the Lord of being. To belong to Christ, the Christ misunderstood and unrecognized along the way, with all the power of heart and will, is what freedom means to the two disciples in the hour of renewed acquaintance. As He had died once for all to live to God alone (Rom. 6, 10), so also their life of freedom finds fulfillment in living for Him alone.

What Christian freedom is, it is through Christ and unto Christ. Only in and through Christ is it known

and experienced. This experience towers far above any natural experience of freedom. For whoever is led to freedom by Christ is not only master of himself, he is filled with the masterfulness of the glorified Christ. As we read in the Letter to the Galatians in its great interpretation of Christian liberty, he is raised up from the condition of the slave to the rank of a son (Gal. 4, 3f). He is empowered to speak with God in the boldness of sonship. In prayer he no longer says "Lord" but "Father." No word articulates our worth in Grace more fundamentally and purely than this. It is not our own stature that enables us to repeat this original expression of Christian freedom. It is the gift of God, His work in us. For this He sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts to cry for us and with us: "Abba, Father."

This also gives us status in the world, putting aside every claim to place us under tutelage. We have grown up. To be of age means to make decisions not out of dependence on rules and customs but out of full and responsible individual decision. There is no individualistic schism here, for Christian consciousness always blossoms from individual knowledge to common consciousness. We are the more mature as we understand the sense of the Church, make her truth and love our own, and express with her the longing for the parousia of Christ.

Freedom in Spirit, like joy and peace, is fulfilled in dedication, by which those liberated by Christ join together in common service and hand one another the bread of the word and of love. Out of this something greater is born, greater even than the boon that lies in the very nature of such an exchange. For out of this union of the free arises that which embraces them all



and surpasses them too, the spirit-form of the free-born, the Church.

Only in the Church does our freedom arrive at perfection. In the bosom of the Church it unfolds wide enough to span the world, and in the heart of the Church it attains living inwardness with itself. With all the other benefits of salvation, it is lovingly guarded by the Church and preserved from falsification, for as the free woman the Church is the loving guardian, "our mother" (Gal. 4, 26).

Through this very love she is put to the test, for as the free woman the Church is the devoted "bride." Thus the closing vision of the Apocalypse: "And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband" (21, 2). Born of the liberating act of the Redeemer and decked with the jewels of royalty, she makes use of her freedom only in the spirit of loving service. She descends from God to man by the natural movement of her love. At the end of this road, on the earth below, she considers herself only the voice of that longing which wells in all hearts and implores for all creation the perfect liberty of the Children of God. This is the greatest achievement of all. For in conducting the vast yearning choir of creation, she achieves harmony with the Spirit who has intoned her prayer from the throne of God. Her prayer responds to the great voice that goes out from the cross (Nicholas of Cusa) and calls all to the assembly of eternal love.

This liberty of the Church, exalted as it is, has its roots and its realization nowhere but in ourselves. Whether the voice of the Church reaches up to the heart of God or reverberates in the hollow shell of everyday living depends on our free accord with her.

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The Church cannot express her maturity until we break with our immaturity. Changing the world can begin only in us, and for that we shall have to muster courage to be free.

The destiny of the world is at stake here, and our own self-realization as well. The free space of the Spirit from which the voice of the praying Church rises is also our living space. This is the only atmosphere in which Christianity can live and breathe. If not free, if done through external coercion or inner necessity, the most selfless and most courageous behavior loses its worth, its countenance, its meaning. It belongs nowhere and has nowhere to go. It is a stranger on a foreign shore.

But what is done in freedom is effective and illuminating. The smallest accomplishment stems from that divine deed of liberation which has rescued us from the power of darkness and transplanted us in the kingdom of light, of eternal wisdom and love. And it contributes, though unnoticed, to the end that the work which began with the sacrifice of Christ will be perfected in the great hour of liberation of His parousia, in the final revelation of the Risen One.

He who acts in the spirit of freedom anticipates this hour. He ministers to the glory to come. In the narrow framework of human action he already holds up the light of the Lamb, which, when the final state of things has come, will be the lamp of the new heaven and the new earth.